

Three Leaders at Arts-Based Schools

Length: 30 minutes

Featured Schools

School:	P.S. 156, The Waverly School of the Arts
Location:	Brooklyn, New York
In this program:	Martha Rodriguez-Torres, principal Oswaldo Malave, assistant principal Janine Eckles, second-grade teacher
School:	Harmony Leland Elementary School
Location:	Mableton, Georgia
In this program:	Sandra McGary-Ervin, principal Mary Perkerson, visual art teacher Tracy Stallings, parent Ramona Jones Hardaway, parent Kathy Bryson, parent
School:	Smith Renaissance School of the Arts
Location:	Denver, Colorado
In this program:	Rory Pullens, assistant principal Sylvia Bookhardt, arts coordinator Kelly Harbolt, drama teacher Suzanne Hewitt, visual art teacher

About This Program

In this program, administrators of three successful arts-based schools share their insights and practical management strategies.

Principal Martha Rodriguez-Torres used her vision of arts-based learning to transform the low-performing **P.S. 156** into **The Waverly School of the Arts**, a source of pride and accomplishment for students and parents in a low-income neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. The school integrates the arts across all curriculum areas and uses dance, music, and other art forms from many cultures to broaden the students' world view:

- Rodriguez-Torres describes her role as “politician, social worker, parent, and police officer” and says that her primary responsibility now is to “provide teachers the resources they need to fulfill the program.”
- She works closely with assistant principal Oswaldo Malave, sharing responsibility for all grades, kindergarten through sixth. She spends a large part of her day visiting classrooms and talking with teachers and children.

Principal Sandra McGary-Ervin oversaw the conversion of the 50-year-old **Harmony Leland Elementary School** in Mableton, Georgia, into a school for the arts—setting high expectations and gaining the support of teachers and parents. As part of its commitment to the arts, the school provides a violin and violin instruction to all 485 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Among the school's emphases:

- According to McGary-Ervin, Harmony Leland's highest priority is literacy. The arts are used in a variety of ways to encourage interest in reading. Visual art teacher Mary Perkerson describes the school's Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) program and says that students use reading time in her classroom to learn more about art and artists.
- Harmony Leland's violin instruction program promotes self-esteem, discipline, and other skills that support the school's guiding value—excellence.

At **Smith Renaissance School of the Arts** in Denver, Colorado, assistant principal Rory Pullens uses his own experience in the arts to bring a personal touch to the day-to-day management of the school. He points out the school's unique characteristics:

- When the school converted to an arts-based program, approximately 50 percent of the teaching staff transferred to other schools. Those who remained, Pullens says, became the core of today's committed staff.
- Pullens spends much of his time visiting classes to, in his words, “see what's going on” and provide ideas and support to teachers. Teachers in arts-based programs, he says, must be able to deal with classrooms that are full of creative energy. These classrooms tend to be more active than those with traditional kinds of instruction. Arts-based schools also must be flexible in accommodating projects that do not fit into traditional 40-minute periods.
- In the program, Pullens also works with arts coordinator Sylvia Bookhardt and the school's arts specialist teachers to explore ways to build effective teams with classroom teachers. “Arts are not something that should be extra for students,” concludes Pullens. “The arts are what development of a child is all about.”

Viewing Suggestions

Who Should Watch This Program

This program is a good resource for staff development for principals, arts coordinators, project team leaders, and others involved in managing arts-based learning. Teachers who have aspirations for advancement to school administration will also find this program valuable.

Other audiences for this program might include:

- teachers and leaders who are interested in increasing the role of the arts in their schools;
- arts specialists and classroom teachers, to support team-building activities; and
- school board or central office leaders, to acquaint them with the strategies, challenges, and rewards of managing arts-based programs.

Before Watching

This program explores management practices in three elementary schools that replaced their traditional curriculums with a schoolwide emphasis on the arts.

As you watch this program, consider these questions:

- What steps would school administrators take to begin the transformation to arts-based teaching and learning?
- What challenges would an administrator expect to encounter in converting to an arts-based school?
- What challenges were encountered by each of the administrators in this program?
- How did the administrators address these challenges?
- What new skills would an administrator need to manage a successful transition from a traditional to an arts-based curriculum?

Consider the similarities and differences in the approaches used by schools in this program: teaching arts subjects as core subject areas and integrating the arts with other subject areas. Look for examples of how each is used by the schools. Can both approaches be used in the same curriculum? Look for examples of where this happens.

Administrators in this program credit the arts for helping the students reach academic standards and other goals. Look for examples of benefits cited by the administrators. Consider what benefits arts-based learning could bring to your school.

Watching the Program

Watch “Three Leaders at Arts-Based Schools” (30 minutes).

Viewing Suggestions, cont'd.

Suggested Activities and Discussion

Consider the following questions for reflection:

- If your school is not an arts-based school, how can you incorporate the arts into your curriculum?
- How would you respond if your school adopted an arts-based approach?
- How can educators organize and collaborate to use the arts as a means of promoting and supporting student inquiry?

Below are some additional ways you can build on the ideas in this program in a variety of school and community settings.

Professional Development Sessions for Administrators

- Create a model plan for incorporating arts-based learning into your school. Include learning objectives and a timetable as well as strategies for meeting them.
- Develop a professional development unit on building teams of arts specialist teachers and classroom teachers.
- Create a schedule that allows your teachers to collaborate and plan together to support the integration of the arts with other subjects.

Professional Development Sessions for Teachers

- Develop a unit that focuses on the classroom management skills that are necessary in an arts-based school.

Curriculum-Planning Sessions

- Consider how you can incorporate arts-based learning into your existing curriculum.
- Facilitate a discussion of goals for an arts-based curriculum. Is your goal to teach specific arts subjects, integrate the arts with other subjects, or both? Consider specific ways you would meet these goals.
- Become familiar with state and national arts education standards for teachers and students.
- Identify local and other resources for funding arts-based projects at your school.

School Board, Parent-Teacher, or Local Government Meetings

- Invite a representative of a school with a successful arts-based program to discuss how the arts can enhance learning at your school.
- Present reflections by students on how the arts have enhanced their readiness to learn or their academic achievement.

Additional Resources

Related Video Library Programs

Watch these programs for more information on ideas explored in “Three Leaders at Arts-Based Schools”:

- What Is Arts Education?
- Leadership Team

Web Resources

The Arts in Every Classroom video library Web site: www.learner.org/channel/libraries/artsineveryclassroom

The Arts in Every Classroom workshop Web site: www.learner.org/channel/workshops/artsineveryclassroom

Standards for the Arts

National Standards for Arts Education: www.ed.gov/pubs/ArtsStandards.html

State Standards for the Arts: [www.ncsl.org/programs/arts/artsed/artedhom.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/programs/arts/artsted/artedhom.htm)

Organizations Mentioned in This Program

The Center for Arts Education, which administers the New York City Annenberg Challenge for Arts Education: www.cae-nyc.org

Denver Public Schools: www.denver.k12.co.us

Project Arts of the New York City Board of Education: www.nycenet.edu/projectarts

Related Organizations and Resources

Arts Education Partnership: <http://aep-arts.org>

National Endowment for the Arts: www.arts.gov

Notes
