

Working With Local Artists

Length: 30 minutes

Featured School

School:	P.S. 156, The Waverly School of the Arts
Location:	Brooklyn, New York
In this program:	Martha Rodriguez-Torres, principal Scott Pivnik, dance and movement teacher Caren Plummer, visiting dance artist, Lotus Music & Dance Kojo Plummer, visiting musician, Lotus Music & Dance Allison Sicuranza, first-grade teacher Leonore Gordon, visiting writer, Teachers & Writers Collaborative Oswaldo Malave, assistant principal Goldie Rich, African strand team leader Diane Thomas, first-grade teacher Laura Parkhurst, first-grade teacher Suzanne Ramos, first-grade teacher

About This Program

Local writers, musicians, dancers, and other artists can be important resources for enriching a multi-arts curriculum. By sharing their knowledge, high expectations, and work habits, these professional artists help students develop the discipline and skills to do satisfying work and expand their creative horizons.

Effective collaborations between schools and local artists don't just happen. They need to be carefully planned, structured, and maintained to meet learning goals and standards—and to produce good experiences for everyone involved.

This program looks at a successful, ongoing collaboration between **P.S. 156, The Waverly School of the Arts**, in Brooklyn, New York, and two local organizations: Lotus Music & Dance and the Teachers & Writers Collaborative. Artists from both organizations collaborate with the school's first-grade teachers to implement an African-themed learning strand. As do other culture-based strands at the school, the 12-week African strand culminates in an original "never-before-seen performance." Among the featured activities:

- African dance artist Caren Plummer and African drummer Kojo Plummer collaborate with first-grade teacher Allison Sicuranza and the school's dance and movement teacher Scott Pivnik to prepare first-grade students for the culminating performance.
- Poet Leonore Gordon works with Sicuranza and the students to create poems of farewell based on an African poetic form. Student poetry is published in a student poetry anthology.
- Sicuranza uses the study of African dance as a starting point for a social studies and vocabulary lesson comparing dance in African communities and dance in the children's own community.
- Teachers and visiting artists communicate regularly about their plans so that the artists can develop appropriate activities and teachers can prepare the students to learn. Everyone involved in a strand also participates in regular team meetings to review the strand curriculum and plan the culminating performance.

"Learning is reciprocal between artists and teachers," observes principal Martha Rodriguez-Torres. "Collaboration provides an opportunity for teachers to learn about the art form in a nonthreatening way and for artists to learn classroom skills."

About This Program, cont'd.

Arts Education Standards Addressed in This Program

Dance

- **Content Standard 1**—Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Accurately demonstrate nonlocomotor/axial movements (such as bend, twist, stretch, swing)
 - Accurately demonstrate eight basic locomotor movements (such as walk, run, hop, jump, leap, gallop, slide, and skip), traveling forward, backward, sideward, diagonally, and turning
 - Demonstrate the ability to define and maintain personal space
 - Demonstrate accuracy in moving to a musical beat and responding to changes in tempo
- **Content Standard 2**—Understanding choreographic principles, processes, and structures
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Create a sequence with a beginning, middle, and end both with and without a rhythmic accompaniment
 - Create a dance phrase, accurately repeat it, and then vary it (making change in the time, space, and/or force/energy)
- **Content Standard 5**—Demonstrating and understanding dance in various cultures and historical periods
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Perform folk dances from various cultures with competence and confidence
 - Learn and effectively share a dance from a resource in their own community: describe the cultural and/or historical context
- **Content Standard 7**—Making connections between dance and other disciplines
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Create a dance project that reveals understanding of a concept or idea from another discipline (such as pattern in dance and science)

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Viewing Suggestions

Who Should Watch This Program

“Working With Local Artists” offers a useful model for collaboration between schools and local arts organizations and for classroom teachers and arts specialist teachers working with professional artists. The program also discusses the role of each collaborator in planning the African strand unit of study and in creating the culminating “never-before-seen performance.”

This program can be used in professional development courses or workshops for classroom and specialist teachers on these specific topics as well as on broad, related topics such as team-building or partnership development.

Other audiences for this program might include:

- professional artists or a local arts organization, to develop partnerships;
- prospective funders, to support an application for funding for a visiting artist or artist residency at your school;
- visiting artists or artists-in-residence, to orient them to classroom practices, teaching techniques, standards, and assessments;
- teachers, to orient them to working with the artists;
- curriculum or arts project planners, to help expand their ideas about how to bring the arts into a unit of study; and
- administrators, parents, the school board, or government officials, to promote the idea of a visiting-artist program.

Before Watching

Teaching a class and creating a work of art require different sets of skills, yet collaborations between teachers and artists can be highly successful. As you watch this program, consider these questions:

- What have the teachers and the artists learned from each other?
- How is this learning accomplished?
- What information do the teachers and artists share?
- How and how often do they share information?

The students in this program clearly enjoy their interactions with the artists. As you watch, look for examples of things that the artists add to the children’s learning experience. How do the children show what they have gained by working with the artists?

In this program, artists and teachers are all involved in the curriculum-planning process. Look for ways that the artists have shaped the curriculum and its implementation. How effective would the unit be if the artists were not involved in planning?

In this program, the visiting artists are associated with two organizations, Lotus Music & Dance and the Teachers & Writers Collaborative. What benefits are gained by collaborating with organizations rather than with individual artists?

Watching the Program

Watch “Working With Local Artists” (30 minutes).

Viewing Suggestions, cont'd.

Suggested Activities and Discussion

Consider the following questions for reflection:

- What would your priorities be when working with an outside artist?
- In what ways could local artists help deepen your students' understanding of their own cultural histories and connect them to other cultures?
- How can a writing program with a local artist strengthen mandated, standards-based content in your class?
- What goals would you set for your first year of working with a local artist? For your second year? For five years down the line?
- How would you encourage students to ask an outside artist questions that could enhance their learning?

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 Teachers

- Develop or attend a course or a workshop on collaborating with local artists. What skills, knowledge, and other resources would teachers need to work effectively with an artist?
- Visit a school that already has a successful relationship with local artists. What can you learn from that school's experience?
- Plan and implement an "arts fair" that brings together teachers and artists in your district. Brainstorm how you might begin working together.
- Create or attend a professional development unit on funding an arts residency.
- Identify resources for creating a work of art in your class: publishing a book of student poetry, staging a performance. What resources would you need, and where can you find them?

Curriculum-Planning Sessions

- Research local arts organizations that collaborate with schools or that might be willing to do so.
- Develop a structured proposal for a visiting-artist or artist-in-residence program. Include goals and objectives, standards to be met, and plans for assessment.
- Identify resources for developing culturally themed units of study like the African strand. What content would you expect the artist to provide?

School Board, Parent-Teacher, or Local Government Meetings

- Invite a representative of a local arts organization or a school with a successful visiting-artist program to discuss how such a collaboration could enhance learning at your school.
- Share a publication of student work or invite students to perform.

Fundraising Efforts

- Check with local foundations and arts councils about support available for artist-teacher collaborations.
- Ask artists for resources they might know about that support school collaborations.
- Talk with local professional organizations, such as local performers' unions, to see if there are assistance programs for placing professional artists in school settings.

Additional Resources

Related Video Library Programs

Watch these programs for more information on ideas explored in “Working With Local Artists”:

- Teaching Dance
- Collaborating With a Cultural Resource
- Bringing Artists to Your Community
- Three Leaders at Arts-Based Schools

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

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

Lotus Music & Dance: www.lotusarts.com

Project Arts of the New York City Board of Education, which helps fund the arts at P.S. 156, The Waverly School of the Arts: www.nycenet.edu/projectarts

Teachers & Writers Collaborative: www.twc.org

Related Organizations and Resources

Americans for the Arts: www.artsusa.org

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

Arts Extension Service Learning Partnerships Planning: www.umass.edu/aes/learningpartners

Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education: www.capeweb.org

Information on African Dance: www.artslynx.org/dance/afro.htm

Information on African Drumming: www.djembe.dk/djembe.html

Information on Langston Hughes and Links to His Poems *Dream Variation* and *Lullaby*: www.poets.org/poets/poets.cfm?prmlID=84; <http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/hughes.htm>