

Oklahoma Arts Council Americans for the Arts State Policy Pilot Program | SP3

Arts Education in Oklahoma Public Schools Case Studies of Five Schools

Prepared by Lisa Raphael, Ph.D. | Nourish Your Path



Oklahoma Arts Council Americans for the Arts

State Policy Pilot Program | SP3

Arts Education in Oklahoma Public Schools Case Studies of Five Schools

Commissioned by the Oklahoma Arts Council as part of
Americans for the Arts' State Pilot Policy Project.

November 21, 2016

Lisa Raphael, Ph.D.

lisa@nourishyourpath.com





Arts Education in Oklahoma Public Schools Case Studies of Five Schools

In 2014, Oklahoma was one of ten states selected to participate in Americans for the Arts' State Policy Pilot Project (SP3), a three-year initiative aimed at strengthening arts education. The Oklahoma Arts Council was the agency charged with leading its state's team for the initiative. Currently, variation exists in the amount and type of arts education available to students in Oklahoma. Each of the state's more than 500 school districts has the ability to decide how—and if—arts learning will be implemented. Students in rural and/or underserved urban communities are, therefore, much less likely to receive consistent, meaningful arts instruction in the classroom.

Oklahoma's participation in the initiative came at an opportune time as changes in state and federal level policy and funding began to imply a need to address long-term shifts in public education. Following the State of Oklahoma's repeal of Common Core Standards in English language arts and mathematics, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) developed new, state-tailored and state-specific academic standards in 2014. Changes to state education standards coincided with declining state revenues, and the resulting reductions in education funding continue to have widespread implications. At the federal level, passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, which replaced No Child Left Behind, also provided renewed dialogue and opportunity for strengthening local control of education. Currently, OSDE is developing a state plan for the implementation of ESSA in Oklahoma.

To guide the continuing work of the state's SP3 team, the Oklahoma Arts Council gathered a geographically, organizationally, and culturally diverse task force comprised of arts education professionals to help determine priorities and steer efforts for the initiative. Task force members represent district administrators, current educators, representatives from higher education, directors of education-related nonprofits, and others who hold active roles in shaping the educational environment of our state.

Over the course of its first three meetings, the task force worked to discuss and define what it considers the necessary support mechanisms for strengthening arts education in schools across the state. Broad discussions resulted in a lengthy list that was honed into a set of three main priorities for arts education: 1) supporting quality instructors and content; 2) ensuring access to the arts for all students; and, 3) framing the message that the arts are essential.

Based on its list of priorities, five Oklahoma schools that are currently providing high quality arts education programs were identified. The schools would serve as case studies to provide a snapshot of how each is implementing its programs and to supply a model from which other schools and districts can potentially build. The results of the study will provide policymakers with strategies for designing and replicating arts education programs throughout the state. These case studies are meant to provide a roadmap to schools, districts, and education decision-makers across the state as they seek to strengthen arts education in the new education climate.

Methods

Selection of case study schools

The Oklahoma Arts Council was interested in obtaining information from schools throughout the state that have a reputation for high quality arts education programs. The Oklahoma Arts Council asked a variety of stakeholders (e.g., current or previous Oklahoma Art Council grantees, a former Fine Arts Director for the Oklahoma State Department of Education, and representatives from the Oklahoma Alliance for Arts Education and Oklahoma A+ Schools, among others) to nominate schools with high quality arts education, and provide justification for their selection. The nomination process resulted in a list of 11 schools. All of the nominated schools addressed at least two of the Council’s priorities for arts instruction – quality instruction and access. The evaluation team worked with the Oklahoma Arts Council to identify five case study schools. Selected schools reflected a representative amount of diversity. Selection criteria included diversity in demographics, grades served, types of arts-related programming, past or present Oklahoma Arts Council funding, and geographic location. As the study progressed, one of the original case schools chose not to participate. The team replaced this school with a different school that fit the criteria.



Characteristics of case study schools

The five schools selected for the case studies represent small, medium, and large schools across the state of Oklahoma. Three of the schools are rural; two of the schools are urban. Variations exist in student enrollment and demographics, the percentage of students with disabilities, the percentage of English language learners, and the percentage of students who qualify for free and/or reduced lunch. Table 1 provides an overview of the case study schools. For confidentiality purposes, the names of the schools have been changed. Throughout the case studies, the term *fine arts* is used to represent each of the school's arts education program, which might include visual arts and/or performing arts (e.g., music, theatre, dance). To avoid confusion, arts-related programs and courses are identified in each school's case study.

Table 1
Case Study Schools



| | State | Eastern Redbud | Oklahoma Rose | Black Swallowtail | Olive Branch | Oklahoma Hills | |
|-----------------------------|-------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|----------------|-------|
| Student Enrollment | - | 285 | 272 | 233 | 1060 | 278 | 585 |
| Grades | - | K-6 | PK-8 | 9-12 | 9-12 | 7-8 | 9-12 |
| Urban/Rural | - | Rural | Rural | Rural | Urban | Urban | Urban |
| Demographics* | | | | | | | |
| African American | 9% | 1% | 7% | 11% | 22% | 55% | 64% |
| Hispanic | 16% | 6% | 5% | 39% | 47% | 11% | 7% |
| Native American | 15% | 29% | 38% | 4% | 8% | 6% | 5% |
| White | 51% | 63% | 49% | 47% | 19% | 19% | 14% |
| Asian | 2% | 0% | 1% | 4% | 4% | <1% | <1% |
| Other | 8% | 1% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 10% | 10% |
| % Special Ed. | 15% | 15% | 15% | 12% | 17% | 30% | 27% |
| % English Language Learners | 7% | 3% | 0% | 9% | 27% | 6% | 3% |
| Free or Reduced Lunch | 61% | 71% | 78% | 70% | 69% | 86% | 71% |

*Percentages do not necessarily add up to 100% due to rounding.

Characteristics of case study participants

At each of the schools, the evaluator interviewed an administrator and one or two of the fine arts teachers. Across the schools, five administrators and eight teachers participated. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to two hours. The evaluator conducted the interview based on a series of questions (see Appendix A) developed in collaboration with the Oklahoma Arts Council. Interviewees were asked to clarify their responses and elaborate on information as necessary. Teaching experience ranged from two to 25 years. Table 2 presents the participant characteristics at each of the schools.

Table 2
Case Study Participants



| | Eastern Redbud | Oklahoma Rose | Black Swallowtail | Olive Branch | Oklahoma Hills |
|----------------------------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Number of teachers interviewed | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Visual arts teachers interviewed | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - |
| Total teaching experience | 4 | 12 | 2 | 25 | - |
| Music teachers interviewed | 1 | N/A | 1 (Vocal) | 1 (Piano) | 1 (Dance) |
| Total teaching experience | 3 | N/A | 22 | 23 | 3 |

Findings

The case studies are presented for each of the schools. Each case study includes a brief description of the school, a summary of the fine arts program’s history and how funding is sustained, teacher characteristics, which is primarily focused on the interviewees, curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the extent to which the fine arts program is aligned to other content areas, connections between the fine arts and diverse cultures, and challenges and supports needed related to fine arts. Each case study concludes with a summary of the findings.



Eastern Redbud Elementary School

Grades K-6 | 285 Students | Rural

About the school

Eastern Redbud Elementary school, which serves grades K-6, is a small rural school located in the northern part of Oklahoma. Music and art comprise the school's fine arts program. All of the students participate in art and music, either in vocal music at the school or band through the district. The principal shared that some of the sixth grade students are bused to the junior high school for district-wide band.

History and funding

The principal relayed that four years ago, a group of teachers, concerned about the lack of a visual arts courses at the school, created the program. These teachers developed the visual arts program by incorporating art elements and state standards. The principal explained that the school never needed permission from the state since art is not required at Eastern Redbud. She conveyed, "There are no minimum requirements for art." In comparison, the principal shared that the school's music program has existed for at least 30 years.

The principal provided background on the differences in funding sources for art and music. When the art program began, the school funded the program through the support of the Oklahoma Arts Council. After the district obtained a corporate donation, the school began funding the art program without the support of the Council. In comparison, the district has provided a budget for the music program since the inception of the program.



Teacher characteristics

The art teacher has a Bachelor of Science in Curriculum and Instruction and is close to finishing her Master in Business Management. Her undergraduate work included one art course. She has taught art for four years at Eastern Redbud. Prior to teaching art, she served as a 5th grade teacher at Eastern Redbud. The art teacher divides her time between Eastern Redbud and the two other elementary schools (4th-6th grades) in the district. She teaches art for 45 minutes on a rotational schedule. Students alternate between art and physical education in a two-week rotation. As a result of this schedule, the art teacher shared that students receive approximately 7-8 art lessons per grade level. The art teacher also serves as the STEM teacher two days a week for the district. The art teacher indicated that she sometimes feels "incompetent" since she has not received any art-specific professional development. The principal offered a different perspective on professional development. She shared that the district provides professional development opportunities to all of the teachers. In comparison to the art teacher, the principal explained that about half of the professional development teachers receive "ends up being content specific."

The art teacher indicated that community members with an interest in art receive a stipend to teach K-3rd grade students to art once a week. The principal, however, shared that a part-time certified teacher teaches art to K-3rd grade. She explained that both of the art teachers lack art degrees or certifications. She relayed, "Those people who have that [the certifications] want to teach full time and that is not something we can offer right now."

The music teacher has a Bachelor of Arts in Music Education. She has taught music full-time for three years at Eastern Redbud since the beginning of her career. Music classes are typically 45 minutes long, with the exception of Kindergarten, which is 20 minutes. Students typically attend music 2 ½ days a week. The music teacher also leads a volunteer after school choir, which includes the three elementary schools in the district. The music teacher discussed attending the Oklahoma Music Educator Association's conference annually and receiving online professional development for the new music curriculum, Quaver.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

The art teacher indicated that no art curriculum exists at Eastern Redbud. When designing lessons, she incorporates the state standards. She also utilizes Pinterest for ideas and incorporates videos from Arts Attack. She frequently asks her husband for input since he has a degree in commercial art. When asked about the art curriculum, the principal explained, "It's a very fluid curriculum." Since students do not receive an art grade, the art teacher assesses students through project completion.

The art teacher measures successes of her lessons and the art program by reflecting on difficulties experienced by students, considering student engagement throughout the lesson, and analyzing overall presentation. She explained that lessons are "unsuccessful" if she and the students do not enjoy them. Ultimately, she aspires for her students to enjoy art, explaining, "Art is not [just] about completing something...It's about enjoying the process." Overall, the art teacher is happy with her classes and the art program. She explained that, "I can't think of anything that's not working well." She noted that the school received foundation money a couple of years ago to purchase art supplies. The art teacher expressed her appreciation for the school administration, sharing that, "They have placed [a] huge value on art..." She further described the administration as "very supportive of anything we want to do."

"[The] curriculum makes life so much easier. It gives you so many tools... all in one place."
-Music teacher



Last year, the district adopted the Quaver curriculum for music, which was customized to the state. The music teacher described the curriculum as "all-encompassing" and expressed her appreciation for the curriculum's emphasis on music theory. Quaver offers a spiraling approach to weekly lessons. The music teacher shared that each of Quaver's lessons include a variety of strategies and activities. Although Quaver incorporates the standards, the music teacher reviews the standards periodically to make sure they are included in lessons. The principal emphasized the importance of the standards, explaining, "We don't teach through curriculum. We teach standards..."



The music teacher assesses students through Smart Board™ games, individual feedback provided to students, and whole class quizzes. She measures the outcomes of her lessons and the music program through identifying daily successes, reviewing check points in Quaver, and reflecting on performances. Overall, the music teacher conveyed that she is happy with her classes and the music program. She praised Quaver several times, describing the curriculum as a “nice guideline for what I need to do.”

Alignment to other content areas

The principal explained that art and music are sometimes aligned with other content areas. Both the art and music teachers provided examples of how fine arts is integrated with other content areas. The music teacher described examples of songs related to whole-school programs and specific class projects, such as the 2nd grade class project, “Rabbits.” The art teacher similarly shared examples of cross curricular connections such as incorporating angles in drawing, which connects to math. She explained that she is generally familiar with student content because of her previous experience as a 5th grade teacher.

Connections to diverse cultures

The art and music teachers provided examples of how their programs include opportunities for students to experience diverse cultures. Both teachers discussed how they incorporate Native American arts and songs, which reflects the demographics of the school (e.g., 29% Native American). Other examples of diverse cultures represented in the arts include students learning about musical instruments from around the world and artist studies of Leonardo da Vinci and Picasso.

Community involvement

According to the art and music teachers, few community members, universities/or colleges, or organizations are involved in their programs. The music teacher provided examples of programming in the community (e.g., choir singing for churches and other groups, district-wide Veteran’s Day assembly). The art teacher indicated that community members are not involved in her program. The only exception, she explained – at the lower grades, community members with an interest in art, receive a stipend to teach K-3rd grade students to art once a week. In comparison, as described previously, the principal shared that a part-time, certified teacher teaches art to K-3rd grades. The principal also relayed that community members often visit with the students, sharing instruments or artwork.

Challenges and supports needed

The teachers experience different types of challenges. The music teacher's biggest challenges include engaging the students and increasing parent involvement. She explained that students are accustomed to constant movement and entertainment, which sometimes presents challenges in sustaining interest. While she recognizes the financial limitations of parents, she hopes for more active parent involvement in music events. In comparison, the principal indicated that the music program is successful, partly because of community involvement and parent and student engagement. The principal conveyed, "We have great community involvement."

In comparison, the art teacher indicated that her biggest challenge concerns her lack of confidence due to limited local professional development opportunities. Further, staffing serves as a challenge. The art teacher relayed that the district is searching for a full-time certified art teacher for the three elementary schools so she can focus solely on STEM. Similarly, the principal acknowledged that the school would like to "afford a full time art teacher," but she is not sure it's "feasible or practical, as a smaller school." Although funding is not an issue this year because of the corporate donation, the principal expressed some uncertainty about the future of the art program.

"There are not a lot of local professional development opportunities."
-Art teacher



The principal shared that one of the biggest challenges this year is the need for an art room. The corporate donation, intended for a different project, took over the art room. The principal explained, "We are back to Art on a Cart. If we needed anything, it would be an art room."



Summary

Although all students participate in art and music at Eastern Redbud, there are significant differences between the art and the music program. These differences are attributable to the district requirements –art is not a requirement and is offered because the school values art. Art is also fairly new to the school whereas the music program has existed for 30 years or more. Differences in funding, teaching requirements, professional development opportunities, and curriculum represent examples of how these programs differ. Another issue, which emerged in the interview data concerns differences in principal and teacher perspectives, primarily regarding staffing and community involvement. For example, the principal and the art teacher possess distinctly different views of available professional development. How often do they communicate about professional development opportunities?





Oklahoma Rose School

Grades PK-8 | 272 Students | Rural

About the school

Oklahoma Rose School, which serves PK-8 is a small, rural school located in central Oklahoma. The fine arts program consists of visual arts. All of the students at Oklahoma Rose are enrolled in visual arts.

History and funding

The principal indicated that he is unsure how the visual arts program began and how the program sustains funding. The principal shared that the school previously offered music and band until teachers in those positions retired. The principal explained that he is unaware if current funding exists to hire a band or music teacher.

Teacher characteristics

The art teacher has a Bachelor of Arts in Arts Education. She has taught at Oklahoma Rose for eight years. She previously taught art for four years in another state. The principal explained that until last year, the art teacher worked part-time at Oklahoma Rose. Art classes are typically 30-50 minutes long, depending on the grade level. Students attend art in rotation, which varies from one to three times per week. Kindergarten students, for example, participate in art two or three times per week in the rotation. The art teacher shared that although none of the school's professional development is related to art, she receives professional development from the local museum. In general, the art teacher attends professional developments four times a year. The art teacher conveyed the need for more art-related professional development at the school, explaining, "We are definitely lacking in that area."

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Since no established art curriculum exists at Oklahoma Rose, the art teacher relies on the standards to design lessons. The art teacher explained that her lessons always follow the standards since the "standards are pretty broad." She discussed the need for additional curriculum guidelines, especially in facilitating alignment with other content areas.



The art teacher talked about how time constraints limit her evaluations of student work. She assesses students by quickly looking at student artwork and determining if they are meeting her objectives. The art teacher explained, "There is no time to sit down [and] do more than [a] quick visual assessment." To overcome this challenge, the art teacher also uploads photographs of all student artwork to a website. This website enables her to review student artwork in more detail. Since the art teacher uploads artwork for every student in every class, students and parents can view this online portfolio of artwork throughout the student's education at Oklahoma Rose. There are also opportunities for students to comment on their artwork and write artist statements. In the upper grades, the art teacher assesses students through quizzes and writing exercises where students describe a picture in words and cite evidence to support their interpretation. Ultimately, the art teacher focuses assessment on "critical thinking for arts." She explained, "If we don't teach them [students] to think creatively...and make things work that aren't the standard, they are not going to be successful in any area as adults."

*"This administration has been very supportive. They see the need for arts...[and] the need for music education."
-Art teacher*



The art teacher adapts lessons based on student understanding. The art teacher explained, "You have to look at what you are doing...how you are going to move kids forward or change what you are doing." The art teacher discussed how students with disabilities often thrive in her classes. She explained how she is uniquely challenging students with disabilities.

The art teacher shared that she relies on individual assessments to measure the successes of her classes. She relayed the difficulty of measuring the "success of a class as a whole," especially when the class includes a "broad range of abilities." She also described the difficulties of maintaining student engagement in classes, especially in the upper grades since Oklahoma Rose only offers art and physical education as specials. She reflected, "I often wonder if they were offered other opportunities... Would [they] choose other...[classes]?" She discussed the possibility of separating students by level, especially in the upper grades, to offer more advanced art classes to interested students.

When asked to describe what's working well in her classes, the teacher spoke about a new teaching strategy introduced by the district to facilitate student reflection. The art teacher indicated that this teaching strategy has switched her focus from product to student reflection. Her students now lead discussions about art. She appreciates the opportunity to "learn and listen" from her students, noting her classes are "not as frantic with production."

Overall, the principal was pleased with Oklahoma Rose's art program. He shared, "What we do, we do well." He attributed the success of the art program to the art teacher. He explained, "She is what makes it [the art program] successful." The principal appreciated how student artwork is "plastered" in the hallways as school decorations.

Alignment to other content areas

The principal described some examples of how art is aligned with school wide programs (e.g., Red Ribbon week). The art teacher described challenges in aligning art lessons to other content areas. She attributed the lack of alignment to high teacher and administrator turnover (e.g., three administrations in five years). She conveyed, "Not everyone is on the same page all the time. They are following their [own] guidelines." The art teacher also discussed the need to actively plan lessons with other teachers.

Connections to diverse cultures

The art teacher indicated that she exposes students to art from a variety of cultures by focusing on a different culture of study each year. Examples include Native American, Asian, and Spanish cultures. The local museum also shares "all kinds of resources" from their cultural exhibits with the art teacher. Further, the principal described school wide programming for diverse cultures such as Native American Day and Black History Month. He cited performances from Native American and Hip-Hop dancers.

Community involvement

Several small colleges are located in Oklahoma Rose's community. These institutions provide the art teacher with student teachers and music performances from the honors choir. The Oklahoma Arts Council has also enabled the art teacher to bring artists to the school. In addition to offering professional development opportunities, the local museum also provides musical performances to Oklahoma Rose. The principal also shared that local organizations such as the Oklahoma Youth Orchestra and the Oklahoma City Philharmonic occasionally visit the school. Further, one of the classes attended an Oklahoma City Ballet performance last school year.



Challenges and supports needed

Challenges described by the art teacher include insufficient class time, lack of a common planning period, inability to adequately support the needs of individual students, absence of parental involvement, and the need for professional development. The art teacher struggles to provide students with quality, organized instruction in the allotted time, and she finds it difficult to meet the needs of individual students with particular requirements. She also wishes for additional time to focus on parent engagement. Although teachers meet in professional learning communities, the art teacher explained that her “planning time is not the same as others.” She eats lunch with the upper grade teachers so she can base lessons on their instruction, but she would like more collaborative planning time to discuss potential connections. The art teacher also desires additional professional development opportunities. She described a need to “connect with other artists.” She described the Oklahoma Arts Council as “amazing,” but requested that the Council provide additional resources for teachers regarding professional development opportunities.

The principal’s biggest challenge concerns the lack of a vocal music and band program at Oklahoma Rose. He compared Oklahoma Rose to other schools, which offer a multitude of arts-related programming (e.g., music, band, recording studios). He shared that the school currently lacks the physical space for these programs. He explained the difficulty of identifying specific goals for the music program since, “without the space, it knocks down the vision.” Further, the principal discussed the difficulty in finding “qualified teachers,” who are willing to teach at Oklahoma Rose, regardless of budget constraints throughout the state. A goal for the upcoming school year is to hire a part-time piano teacher, which offers the “most economical way to...have a music teacher.” The art teacher also recognized the need for a music program at Oklahoma Rose. She explained that when musicians visited the school, students did not know the words to common songs such as “America the Beautiful” or “This Land is Your Land.” The art teacher appreciated the support provided by other teachers and the administration.

*“[Students] are missing out. We don’t have enough [fine arts] classes.”
-Principal*



She indicated that members of the administration “see the need for arts...[and] the need for music education.” Ultimately, the art teacher considered herself “fortunate” for teaching art at Oklahoma Rose since many schools in the state lack a fine arts program. The principal conferred that he “approves everything in the arts” because “we [Oklahoma Rose School] are lacking in the arts.” He further shared that he “would like to see kids have better opportunity in... [the] 21st century, to express themselves through the arts.”

Summary

As a small, rural school, Oklahoma Rose offers few options to students. Although the school offered band and vocal music in the past, the school currently only offers visual arts. Both the principal and the art teacher discussed the need for a music program. At this time, the principal envisions a part-time piano teacher for the upcoming school year since he anticipates difficulty in finding a certified teacher for music and lacks space for permanent music classrooms. The art teacher desires additional professional development opportunities and collaborative planning time with other teachers. In the community, the local museum supports the art teacher by providing content-specific professional development, resources and materials from museum exhibits, and performances.





Black Swallowtail High School

Grades 9-12 | 233 Students | Rural

About the school

Black Swallowtail High School is a small, rural high school located in southwest Oklahoma. The fine arts program consists of art and music. Current courses consist of Art I, Art II, Jazz Band, Instrumental Band, Vocal Music (i.e., Varsity Choir), and Music Appreciation. Fine arts courses are 50 minutes long. After school activities include Women's Show Choir and Art Club, both of which began in the 2016-17 school year. The school is also planning to start a drama club this school year. Enrollment in fine arts courses varies from year to year, with 5% to 31% of the student body participating in any given year. Separately, last year, over 60% of students participated in the school's annual musical.

History and funding

With the exception of jazz band, all of the art and music courses have existed for many years at Black Swallowtail. Jazz band started last year after a teacher proposed this course, to provide a "niche" for students. The principal explained that the school board approved Jazz Band without any hesitation. The principal also shared that the school's enrichment foundation and the district contributes financially to the school's fine arts program. The principal was unsure how much money the district set aside for the fine arts program, explaining, "[The] district sets aside money just like it does for athletics." Further, community donations and fundraisers support special programs and field trips related to the fine arts.

Teacher characteristics

The art teacher, in his second year of teaching, received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design and is currently finishing an alternative certification program. Prior to teaching, the art teacher worked as a graphic and web designer. In addition to teaching art at the high school, the art teacher travels to the middle school on a rotation and teaches art to seventh and eighth graders. The art teacher also has a screen printing business, displays his work in art galleries, and is the co-owner of a local coffee shop, which hosts weekly drawing nights for the art club and the local community.



Both the principal and the art teacher explained that school-provided professional development primarily focuses on general education issues (e.g., gradebook, relationships, student engagement). This year, the art teacher plans to take an online course focused on developing art curriculum, and he aims to attend an art workshop at an institute.

The music teacher has a Bachelor's of Arts in Music and Piano Performance and a master's degree in music education. She has taught music for 22 years, all of which at Black Swallowtail except for one year. The music teacher attends professional development throughout the school year, which includes opportunities at local universities and conferences.

The principal shared that the band director is new to Black Swallowtail this year. With respect to professional development, the principal explained that there are no content-specific professional development requirements. He explained, "I expect professionals to...keep up with [the] latest trend[s] and know what's expected."

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

The art teacher designed the curriculum based on the state standards. At the beginning of each school year, he creates a scope and sequence, which describes the topic covered for the month and its relationship to the standards. The principal reviews all of the scope and sequence with teachers.

The art teacher strives to tailor lessons around student interest, hoping to "spark something for students." He explained that he is currently "reconfiguring" the art program to include modern elements (e.g., graphic design, screen printing, and photography). He also designs multi-faceted lessons, which include vocabulary, principles and elements of design, and art history. Assessment occurs through grading daily tasks (e.g.vocabulary), reviewing sketch book assignments every two weeks, evaluating large projects, and employing end of semester tests. The art teacher explained that during project work, he "bounce[s] around to all of the students and watches them while they work." He discussed the opportunity to establish personal working relationships with each student in a small school. The art teacher measures success based on feedback from his principal and superintendent and through his informal assessments of class climate. The art teacher asks students to share their opinions of projects, asking questions such as, "Did the project make sense to you?", "Did you understand what I was trying to accomplish?", and "What did you learn?"

Overall, the art teacher conveyed that he is happy with his classes and the program. Students are also happy in his classes since they are allowed to choose assignments and materials.

The music teacher designs the music curriculum based on the all-state selections chosen by clinicians at the beginning of the school year. She also utilizes online resources such as www.musictheory.net and www.sitereadingfactory.com to facilitate site reading. She explained she easily covers most of the standards in a single piece of music. Every year, she selects the school-wide musical based on student interests and skills. The music teacher also designs lessons, in part based on available resources. Since she tends to have large classes (e.g., 62 students in choir), she relies on community volunteers for assistance. One of the volunteers assists her with choir on a regular basis. The presence of this community member enables her to divide the class into sectional rehearsals for a couple of days throughout the work until they reconvene as a whole class on Friday.

*"It's easy to get through the all of the standards... in one piece of music."
-Music teacher*



She evaluates students during performances, often having students sing for her privately for assessment purposes. Other examples of assessments include written (e.g., pre and post-test on music theory) and peer assessments. Because the teacher has worked with some students for up to eight or nine years, she sometimes relies on community members to provide an assessment of students through an "unbiased view." The music teacher shared that assessments primarily focus on fostering student motivation rather than failure. The music teacher works with the choir council (a student-led organization) to measure the success of classes and the music program. At the beginning of each school year, the music teacher and the choir council set goals concerning the number of students selected for the regional choir, the number of students who participate in the musical, and desired ratings for upcoming choir contests.

The music teacher acknowledged challenges experienced by students, and she discussed the importance of choir providing an outlet for students. The teacher indicated that the provision of an outlet and other intangible benefits represent, "goals that you can't set...but are just as important," She noted, "how many kids made it through the day because they came and sang."



Overall, the music teacher noted that the students enjoyed the musical more than anything else. She explained, “They really enjoy working together... [for]... the musical.” She requires all of her students to participate in the musical.

Overall, the principal described the visual arts and vocal music programs as “stellar.” He appreciates the efforts of the visual arts teacher to offer new opportunities to students (e.g., screen printing business, photography). He explained, however, that the instrumental program is “not where we want it yet.” The band director has less experience than the other fine arts teachers and is currently “struggling” to grow the program. Also, the band teacher is split between the other schools in the district so he only teaches at Black Swallowtail for three hours a day.

During the interview, a community volunteer for the music program shared a story, which reflects administrator support and enthusiasm for the fine arts. When the girls chorus returned back home after being “singled out” for excellence at the all-state competition, the principal asked the police to provide them with a motorcycle escort. With “people lining the streets,” the girls received a “local celebration” for their accomplishments.

Alignment to other content areas

The art teacher did not provide any connections between art and other content areas. Rather, he described how he aligned the content to the standards. Similarly, the music teacher explained that alignment to other content areas primarily occurs in elementary and middle school. She, however, shared examples of how students review poems or history in relation to songs. Similarly, the principal was unsure of any explicit connections to other content areas, aside from music, visual arts, and band involvement in the annual school musical. He discussed possible opportunities to integrate the school’s robotics program with the arts.

Connections to diverse cultures

The art teacher shared examples of a variety of artists with his students. He talked with his students about artist struggles, explaining that art is an, “opportunity to express yourself and build relationships with others,” regardless of background. The art teacher also incorporates other cultures in his projects. For example, last year he focused on Harlem. This year, the class will study local Native American art. In music, students are exposed to multiple languages through various songs. Also, music students are exposed to different contexts when visiting different cities including Nashville, St. Louis, and Dallas.

Community involvement

Both the music teacher and the principal provided an exhaustive list of community involvement. Examples include community volunteers, universities and colleges, the local arts and humanities council, and the local theatre. Community members provide assistance such as working with students in the classroom, choreography for performances, and financial support through booster clubs. University and colleges offer joint performance opportunities, feedback prior to competitions, workshops, and more. The local theatre provides performance opportunities, local artists, and when the school was undergoing repairs, the use of their space. Former students also offer their support when needed. Community involvement also consists of outreach to the community. For example, the choir delivers singing valentines to nursing homes, business, personal residences, and schools in celebration of Valentine's Day. Without community support, the music teacher indicated that Black Swallowtail would not be able to offer their comprehensive music education program in the school's small, rural community. The art teacher also emphasized the contribution of the community enrichment foundation to the art department. He discussed plans to visit local artist studios with students and possibly tour the art department of a nearby university.

There is a strong value... [placed on] the arts in our town."
-Principal



The principal explained that "Our town expects us to have a good arts program." He shared that community members strongly expressed their disappointment when the district cut the K-5th grade visual arts teacher for several years. Thankfully, the position was restored this year.

Challenges and supports needed

The art teacher discussed how funding challenges in the district affects his course load. Last year, the art teacher also taught K-5th grade art in addition to 7th-12th grade since the district lacked the funding to hire an art teacher for the elementary grades. This year, the budget enables staffing for K-5th grade art, which frees up some time for the art teacher. Despite these funding constraints, the art teacher appreciates that the principal and the superintendent "care a lot" about the arts. The art teacher aims to overcome budgetary limitations by establishing a screen printing business with students from his classes and the art club for t-shirts needed by Black Swallowtail's clubs and organizations.



The community's enrichment foundation has provided initial funding for this endeavor. As students participate in the multiple elements of screen printing (e.g., computer, digital, production), the art teacher explained that they will "see from start to finish [what's involved] in creating a product." The art teacher described the screen printing business as an opportunity of achieving self-reliance for the art department through a, "holistic approach to saving money and making money for the art department."

With respect to supports needed, the art teacher mentioned the possibility of classroom assistants. He noted that the music department has the assistance of volunteer community members. The art teacher anticipates that local artists would also volunteer their time in art classes.

Similar to the art teacher, the music teacher described budget challenges. She shared that their "budgets were done away with," which limits music purchases for her students. Although the enrichment foundation provided some additional support this year, student in music classes must now share music. The music teacher desires \$1,000 to purchase music. The music teacher also relayed that the band director struggles without an instrument repair budget this year. She explained that community donations "place a heavy burden" on people who already struggling. The music teacher also wishes for an additional staff person to assist her and the band director with clerical tasks (e.g., copying, attendance, etc.). In previous years, she had a staff member in this position.

The music teacher indicated that her biggest challenges include large class sizes and juggling student schedules for rehearsals. Although community members often help, she is regularly teaching on her own in the classroom. She also described how Black Swallowtail students are typically involved in multiple activities. She accommodates their schedules, which often includes evening rehearsals. She explained, "In a school our size, I really want them to have [the] opportunity to...[participate]...in band and choir." She spoke passionately about wanting students to have the "opportunity," since most of her students live below the poverty level. She talked about how teachers provide students with food on a daily basis.

The principal confirmed the need for additional staffing. He spoke about the need for an additional band instructor, additional people to help out with choir, and the need for staffing at the middle school, which would relieve the duties of the fine arts teacher.

Summary

Black Swallowtail is a small rural school with a comprehensive fine arts program. The school's administrators and community offer dedicated support for the program. A new visual arts teacher with innovative ideas has started transforming the art program with respect to the courses, how the program can sustain itself financially, and connections with the local community. The music teacher's years of experience has enabled substantial community support. Despite these positives, the school struggles with financial constraints and staffing issues.





Olive Branch High School

Grades 9-12 | 1060 Students | Urban

About the school

Olive Branch High School is a large, urban high school located in central Oklahoma. Its fine arts program consists of art and music. Current fine arts course offerings consist of Art I, Art II, AP Studio Art, Choir, Orchestra, Band, Guitar, Dance, and Drama. Classes meet everyday for 55 minutes.

History and funding

The assistant principal is uncertain of how the fine arts program began and how funding is currently sustained. He explained that the district approved Guitar within the past few years. All of the other fine arts courses have existed at the school for a while. The assistant principal shared that the guitar teacher has “more than enough” resources for his classes. He relayed that other teachers rely on community donations and online crowd fundraising campaigns to support their programs.

Teacher characteristics

The art teacher is in his 20th year of teaching at Olive Branch. He currently teaches Art I, Art II, and AP Studio Art. Another visual arts teacher at Olive Branch teaches other sections of Art I. He has five years of previous teaching experience at other schools. He also worked in graphic arts and commercial screen printing for 13 years. His undergraduate degree is in art education. The art teacher noted that most professional development at the school is “geared toward core classes.” The art teacher primarily attends a four-day institute every other year, which focuses on a specific area of art. He also rarely attends an annual art education conference. Obstacles to attending professional development include travel costs and the timing of professional development opportunities. The art teacher shared that professional development opportunities are “very few and far between” after the state extinguished the points system for continuing education requirements.



The piano teacher is in her 11th year of teaching at Olive Branch. She currently teaches Piano but also assists with Vocal Music since the current instructor teaches at Olive Branch for just an hour, also teaches Band, and splits his time between the middle and high schools. The piano teacher also has 12 years of teaching experience at other schools. She has an undergraduate degree in Piano and Vocal Education. The piano teacher shared that she attends the “standard professional development” through the school, which is mostly unrelated to music. For five days during the school year, the piano teacher attends state conferences for piano-specific and/or music-related professional development.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

The art teacher designed his own curriculum based on the state standards and feedback from a previous district fine arts coordinator. He explained that a previous district fine arts coordinator had suggested the teaching of basic drawing in the first semester and colors in the second semester. He explained that he is able to design lessons however he wants to, as long as he is meeting the state standards. Early in his career, the art teacher designed lessons based on “trial and error,” seeing what worked for him and the students. The art teacher now incorporates Marzano’s concept of “chunking” (the focus of teacher evaluations at the school) throughout his lessons by “breaking everything into little parts” and utilizing exercises from the book, “Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain.” Assessments include formative-ongoing feedback to students and summative quizzes and exams.

The art teacher provides students with a detailed rubric, which outlines specific objectives regarding expectations for technique, craftsmanship, neatness, the use of art materials, composition, and thoughtfulness. The art teacher explained that he is “constantly redirecting [students] toward the [assignment] objectives.” Based on student understanding and assessment results, the art teacher adjusts his pacing. Overall, the art teacher indicated that the AP Art is more successful than his other classes. He explained that AP Art provides an opportunity for Art II students to “stay in art.” He perceived that without AP Art, seniors would “be bored” in Art II.

*“We don’t have a curriculum. I have designed my own curriculum.”
-Art teacher*



The piano teacher uses a curriculum designed for college students by the University of Oklahoma. She chose the curriculum based on opportunities to engage students. The lessons are designed and aligned to the standards. She assesses student mastery of piano concepts through formative progress checks and summative solo performances. Similar to the art teacher, she provides students with a detailed rubric, which outlines specific objectives.

The piano teacher has a “piano pedagogy” program where advanced students listen to other students and provide teaching assistance when needed. She adapts lessons based on student understanding and often relies on pedagogy students to assist other students. She measures the success of her program based on student participation at contests and the quality of performances during solos. She also celebrates student success in her classes when everyone is playing together “on the same beat.” Overall, the piano teacher described her classes as a boost to students’ self-confidence, especially during performances.

The assistant principal spoke about his appreciation for the music program. He especially enjoys hearing students perform. He explained that “hearing and seeing what they are doing...is the best part of my day.” He also values praise from community members following performances. He attributes the success of the music program to teacher involvement with the middle schools (e.g., several teachers split their time between Olive Branch and the feeder middle schools), explaining that by the time students reached high school, “They already have vested interest..”

Alignment to other content areas

The art teacher received training from the Kennedy Center on how to integrate arts with other content areas. He described examples of how he connected art to math, science, and history. For example, he shared that in Art II, students draw a skeleton, which connects to the Physiology and Anatomy class. Students also learn a critical method for reviewing artwork, which incorporates writing. In relationship to math, students learn measurements during lessons on perspective. The art teacher explained that collaboration with other teachers occurs on an individual, informal basis since Olive Branch is not an arts integrated school. He sometimes collaborates with the U.S. History teacher because of the close proximity of their classrooms.



The assistant principal explained that the administration developed a “learning map” this year, which depicts the units of study for each subject. Although teachers are not formally expected to collaborate with other teachers on cross-curricular connections, they can choose to incorporate other content areas. The piano teacher discussed how the learning map facilitates connections to content areas such as math through fractions, history (e.g., maps and songs related to the Erie Canal), and language (e.g., Italian). Although the piano teacher does not collaborate with the math teachers, she explained that students develop a strong understanding of fractions because she teaches them “all the time.”

Connections to diverse cultures

Both the art teacher and the piano teacher described the school as culturally diverse. The art teacher explained that students often share aspects of their culture in classes. Also, the art teacher incorporates culture throughout lessons (e.g., folk arts, cultural arts). The piano teacher explained that the curriculum includes explicit connections to diverse cultures. She spoke about lessons, which focus on pianists from different cultures, as well as cultural diversity in the solos chosen by students. The assistant principal confirmed that the music teachers are “constantly incorporating diversity” in dance, piano, and guitar performances.

Community involvement

Both the art teacher and the piano teacher shared multiple examples of community involvement, which includes local colleges and universities, associations, and Olive Branch’s alumni group. Local colleges and universities provide students with opportunities to compete, perform, attend classes, and receive mentoring through private lessons and/or critiques. The state association sponsors a portfolio day for art students. At this event, art schools recruit students and provide feedback on their work. Olive Branch’s alumni group offers substantial support. The piano teacher shared that Olive Branch’s alumni group donated \$500,000 for the school’s auditorium repairs. The alumni group also provides college scholarships to students.

Challenges and supports needed

The art teacher discussed the challenge of maintaining continuity in the fine arts program with high administrative and teacher turnover. The current principal was in his first year at Olive Branch. The assistant principal shared that he was starting his fourth year at the school, which is the second longest of the school’s administrators.

The art teacher explained how changes in the administration affect his schedule. Although the art teacher and the previous principal agreed that he could teach an honors class this year, the new principal did not know anything about this agreement and gave the art teacher a large Art I class. Another challenge for the art teacher concerns high art teacher turnover. There are two visual arts teachers at Olive Branch. At the beginning of his career, the art teacher worked with the other art teacher for ten years. Since then, Olive Branch has transitioned eight other art teachers in the last ten years. In one year, Olive Branch had three different art teachers. The art teacher expressed his frustration with a district-wide policy that enables teachers with seniority, in danger of losing their jobs, to take another teacher's position, even at a different school. The art teacher attributes state budget cuts as a contributor since many art teachers lost their jobs with recent budget cuts.

Budget challenges also affect classroom supplies. The art teacher talked extensively about the difficulty of affording supplies. Last year, he received \$1200 for 160 students. This year, he anticipates that he will receive \$600. He receives some donations from the alumni association, but for the most part, he pays for supplies himself. He shared that he needs a new set of mono printing plates for his printing press since his were lost during remodeling of the school. The art teacher shared that he strives to provide his students with high quality art supplies, but funding constraints limit him. For example, he indicated that students have been using the "same tub of markers for four years now." Similarly, the piano teacher indicated although funding cuts are made every year, she still needs money to send students to competitions, pay for music, and other supplies. In past years, the local foundation provided resources for students to enter contests. Currently, the piano teacher is writing grants for student entry fees. Also, the piano teacher noted that students are struggling with the effects of poverty - she is feeding students everyday.

"I have more kids in my classes than keyboards"
-Piano teacher



The assistant principal recognized the need for additional funding, sharing that the fine arts program lost a “substantial” amount of money this school year. The assistant principal acknowledged that teachers are “advocating for their program[s],” remaining passionate about their work.

The piano teacher also discussed equity issues concerning the fine arts. For example, although athletes are transported in charter buses, the piano teacher transports students in her personal van since the school lacks the resources. She explained that, “Most kids feel like they are second class [citizens] because of transportation.” Another equity issue concerns the amount of planning time for art teachers. As a result of budget cuts, art teachers at Olive Branch receive less planning time than other teachers since they now must cover classes. The piano teacher expressed her frustration with the inequitable planning time. The piano teacher also shared inequity issues in the state regarding recognition of academic-all-state students compared to recipients of the superintendent’s arts award of excellence. For both, the top 100 students are recognized by the state. The academic-all-state team, however, receives additional recognition through a \$2000 scholarship. The piano teacher felt that art students also deserved scholarship money.

The art teacher shared that the fine arts program needs to classify art as a true elective. He attributed discipline issues (e.g., truancy, tardiness, threats made by students) to a lack of student engagement. He explained that the school enrolls students in art classes because, “They don’t have any other place to put them... or they got thrown out of shop class.” In comparison, the assistant principal spoke of the need for additional fine arts requirements. He explained that students sometimes do not enroll in the fine arts because they focus solely on graduation requirements. Further, after students fulfill their requirements, they serve as office or teacher aides, potentially multiple times in the school, instead of taking courses.

Large class sizes are a challenge for the art teacher and the piano teacher. At one point, the art teacher had 50 students in the class. Until Olive Branch made adjustments, students sat on the floor for a couple of weeks. The art teacher currently has 27-31 students in Art I and Art II and 12 students in AP Art. The art teacher indicated that, “In those big classes, you don’t get that one-on-one [time] with your top students.” The piano teacher currently has 15 students in her advanced classes and 25 students in her other classes. Before the budget cuts, she had 15 students in all of her classes.

The art teacher desires additional resources from the Oklahoma Arts Council such as visiting artists. He explained that a former district fine arts supervisor provided the school with these types of opportunities. The art teacher discussed the limitations of the schedule, sharing that in previous years, they had 85-minute blocks of time. The assistant principal shared the difficulty of conflicts in the master schedule. Course requirements sometimes prevent students from enrolling in fine arts classes. He relayed that the principal attempts to avoid conflicts in the master schedule.

Summary

While Olive Branch offers multiple fine arts offerings to students, class sizes are large and sometimes fraught with disciplinary problems. The art teacher and the assistant principal expressed different views of regarding fine arts requirements –increasing or decreasing the requirements to combat low student engagement. The community supports the fine arts program, especially local colleges and universities and the school’s alumni association. Both the art teacher and the piano teacher expressed numerous challenges related to budget, administrator and teacher turnover, and equity issues related to the fine arts.





Oklahoma Hills Junior and Senior High School

Grades 7-8 | 278 Students | Urban

Grades 9-12 | 585 Students | Urban

About the school

Oklahoma Hills School is a medium-sized, urban, combined junior and senior high school located in eastern Oklahoma. As a magnet, the school offers an extensive fine arts and performing arts program, which includes course offerings such as Fashion Design, Orchestra, Jazz Band, Dance, Instrumental Performance, Film and Media Production, Guitar, Vocal Music, 2D Design, 3D Design, Photography, Graphic Design, Music Recording Art, Arts Management, Piano, AP Music Theory, and more. Although film and media production is not typically considered part of the fine arts, the assistant principal noted that their film and media production courses focused on arts production by having students program the lighting design for the theatre productions. Classes meet everyday for 50-55 minutes. All students participate in fine arts at Oklahoma Hills.

History and funding

The assistant principal shared that in the 1990s, the principal at the time crafted a vision for the magnet program. This principal felt that a fine arts and the performing arts school would set Oklahoma Hills apart from other schools. With the support of the community and the district, the school received a Magnet Schools of America grant, which provided three years of initial funding for studios, equipment, professional development. After this grant ended, the school was awarded a federal improvement grant, which continued to support the development of the program and additional training for staff and faculty. The assistant principal explained that the school had "six years of grant funding to support [the] full inclusion of fine and performing arts." During the grant period, the school chose courses based on the selections offered by performing arts schools across the nation, resources available at universities and colleges, community resources, and the potential for sustainability after the grant period.

*"Our larger mission [is] to produce citizens who value... and support the arts as adults."
-Principal*



During the grant funding, the school worked with partners to plan the sustainability of programs offered at Oklahoma Hills. The assistant principal shared, for example, how the school collaborated with local community colleges and out of state universities to determine how students could pursue college opportunities based on the school's music production program. Oklahoma Hills sustains the music production program based on initial decisions about courses that transfer easily into college and through a vetting process for students enrolled in the program that identifies their college intentions.

Since the grant funding ended, the school has made adjustments to its programs. The assistant principal discussed how funding affects program availability and decisions on where cuts are made. For example, some courses are now offered on a rotating basis. The school decided to eliminate the stained glass program because, as the assistant principal shared, "The cost of materials for stained glass is very expensive for the number of students served." Despite these adjustments, the assistant principal shared that some programs have grown, such as the dance program. With the support of recent bond money, Oklahoma Hills upgraded their dance studio, which includes a costume closet, a dressing room, and an expensive Marley dance floor. The assistant principal shared that she hoped students would develop a life-long appreciation for the arts. She explained that Oklahoma Hills worked "diligently" to ensure that students "discover their place in the arts."

Teacher characteristics

The assistant principal shared that the school currently has ten full-time fine arts staff, as well as additional staff, who split their time between Oklahoma Hills and other schools. The dance teacher has a Bachelor in Fine Arts and a Master in Fine Arts in Modern Dance and Teaching. She is currently in her third year of teaching at Oklahoma Hills. She is also the director of the dance department. The dance teacher teaches class such as Ballet, Jazz Dance, Modern Dance, Dance I, Dance II-IV (a merged class with different levels), and directs a resident dance company comprised of juniors and seniors. As a graduate student, she taught several university dance classes. The dance teacher explained that the district does not provide any professional development specific to dance. She also does not attend any professional development outside the district, explaining that she researches information on her own time about dance (e.g., National Dance Education Association's site). Similarly, the assistant principal shared that teachers' professional needs are not "fully being met at [the] same level of equity," such as through dance-specific professional development.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

The assistant principal shared that during the magnet grant funding, the school worked with the district to develop courses. To add new courses, the district's course approval process depends upon the existence of state standards for the proposed course. For courses with state standards, the district provides all of the resources (e.g., curriculum maps, pacing calendar). For courses without state standards, the district and the school engage in a lengthy approval process. The assistant principal explained that programs without state standards (e.g., dance) rely on the national standards for dance. The course approval process for dance required a comprehensive proposal from Oklahoma Hills staff. The district's curriculum committee developed the curriculum and determined what modifications if any, are needed. The process included consideration of the curriculum's receivers, as well as assessment, strategies, standards, and outcomes.

Contrary to the assistant principal's description, the dance teacher indicated that the dance program does not have a set curriculum. The dance teacher explained that she designs lessons based on students needs. She described her general elective classes as an "uphill battle" in capturing student attention, discussing the difficulty of keeping students in the room for five minutes. Her classes usually begin with a warmup, which incorporates basic technique and yoga. She often asks her students for input on the direction of the class. Since there are no state standards for dance, she focuses on teaching the basic techniques of dance to general elective students. The rehearsal and performance classes focus on preparation for upcoming performances.

Assessments depend on the class. For the general electives, she focuses on student engagement, their understanding of dance terminology, and their contribution to projects. She explained that in these classes, it's a "victory" if students participate so her assessments are "pretty basic." In the rehearsal and performance classes, she assesses through choreography tests (e.g., students perform the choreography one at a time), as well as students' stage presence, professionalism, and techniques during performances. The dance teacher relayed that instead of assessing students in the dance company, she asks them to reflect on their performances and identify strategies for improvement. She also videotapes students during movement tests and asks students to self-reflect. The dance teacher constantly reflects on how to engage students in her elective classes. With the dance company, she focuses on building student self-confidence, often encouraging them with multiple approaches.



The dance teacher shared that she never taught high school before 2014. She has adapted her style based on students needs and interests. Overall, the dance teacher expressed her happiness with how the dance program is “growing and adapting.” She shared that the dance company, which started in 2014, originally started as an after school club with four people. Now, it is a two-period class with 16 students.

Alignment to other content areas

The assistant principal shared that staff has received training for embedding the arts in core curriculum. She noted that most infusing of the arts occurs in English and Social Studies, “by virtue of using document based text.” She discussed the challenges of arts integration in math, as math teachers struggle to “see beyond problem-solving” and embrace the “conceptual side of math.” The assistant principal further shared that teachers often differentiate instruction through arts integration based on progress monitoring of their assessment data. The dance teacher sometimes collaborates with vocal music and orchestra for performances. She discussed plans to collaborate with the art department for an upcoming combined dance, poetry, and art performance. She has also created a dance inspired by literature. Aside from those example, the dance teacher does not collaborate with other teachers.

Connections to diverse cultures

The dance teacher integrates dance history throughout her lessons. These lessons incorporate other cultures and contexts such as the history of ballet in Europe, the birth of modern dance and jazz dance in the South. As a predominantly African-American school, the assistant principal relayed, “[A] lot of our focus tends to be African-Americans in the arts.”

Community involvement

The assistant principal shared multiple examples of how community members support the school. Artists-in-residence participate at Oklahoma Hills as co-teachers. Local and national artists also work with students in classes on an occasional basis. A local fashion designer works with students for a couple of hours each week. Local colleges and universities offer opportunities for students to attend master classes. Because of donations, students are often able to visit art exhibits at museums at no cost. Corporate donors, a local foundation, and other organizations provide financial support. Oklahoma Hills also encourages student to participate in the local arts community.

The dance teacher spoke about performance opportunities for students, including an annual statewide dance festival, a local dance festival, and a girls' teen summit. She has talked with friends at a local university about potential collaborations, but funding and transportation limits this possibility.

Challenges and supports needed

A significant challenge for the dance teacher concerns funding, especially with respect to transportation. She shared that she hopes to bring students to workshops at the local university or at other organizations, but lacks transportation. She expressed her frustrations with the district –she has applied for funding through the district but was denied after a lengthy process. She talked about the possibility of starting a booster club, which would enable her to use funds for anything, including transportation. Funding also limits the dance teacher's ability to engage community members (e.g., bring guest choreographers and community dancers to Oklahoma Hills).

The assistant principal also described funding challenges. For example, after the grant funding ended, Oklahoma Hills decided to focus on smaller, more intimate productions as a result of decreased funding. The assistant principal shared that these type of performances also enable all students to participate and bring in "larger numbers of community members" to multiple performances. Funding has also affected the quality of the visual arts program. The assistant principal shared that "Everybody takes visual arts class whether or not they have an interest." Since the budget cuts, visual arts classes increased to 35 students. The assistant principal discussed challenges with funding "enough staff to offer all of these different classes" while maintaining reasonable class sizes. Despite these challenges, the assistant principal expressed her satisfaction with the programs offered at Oklahoma Hills.

Even with funding constraints, as a fine arts and performing arts magnet, Oklahoma Hills receives additional district funding for staffing. The assistant principal explained that funding from "additional superintendent allocations...makes...the dance program possible." Despite these benefits, the assistant principal also shared that Oklahoma Hills has particular aspects of their programs that are not funded by the district (e.g., ballet shoes). She indicated that Oklahoma Hills must make decisions about what is allowable by district funding and, if necessary, rely on donor support.



Another challenge described by the assistant principal concerns the integration of arts in core content areas. She explained, "Even when you provide professional development, it doesn't necessarily translate into implementation." She discussed the ongoing struggles to infuse arts in mathematics. The assistant principal talked about potential changes to next year's school schedule, which would encourage arts integration through the application of math in engineering.

As discussed previously, the dance teacher struggles to engage her students in elective classes. The teacher discussed the need to "revamp classes" so advanced-level courses are reserved for audition-only students. She explained the challenges of engaging students in mixed level classes. She also hoped to modify course titles to reflect the dance company. The dance teacher hoped to expand the dance company next year into two courses – a junior high dance company and a senior high dance company. Currently, the dance company consists of both junior high and senior high students. Ultimately, the dance teacher wished for dance standards in the state, as well as a dance program in every high school. In comparison, the assistant principal did not anticipate any changes in art offerings at Oklahoma Hills. She shared that she is "comfortable with course rotations," as well as with the process for obtaining student and family input, and soliciting student interest during pre-enrollment.

The dance teacher also discussed the need for another certified teacher. She described multiple challenges with the current artist-in-residence, primarily concerning teaching style and level of responsibility for classes. The assistant principal discussed some challenges with retaining staff. For example, Oklahoma Hills is currently on their fourth fashion design teacher, and their second recording studio teacher. The assistant principal shared that the unique aspects of Oklahoma Hills programs, which require certification in the arts, as well as real world experience makes retaining staff especially important. Also, the school confronts high administrative turnover. Although the assistant principal has worked at Oklahoma Hills for over 20 years, the school has had three principals in the last seven years. The assistant principal indicated that none of these principals started the magnet program nor did they have the original "intent and vision of the grant."

*"I would love to have another certified teacher in this department."
-Dance teacher*



Summary

Oklahoma Hills is a fine arts and performing arts magnet, which offers a tremendous variety of courses for students. The school has specialized equipment and resources for their programs. Despite these resources, the dance teacher does not receive any content-specific professional development through the school, district, or the community. Some differences in perspectives emerged in the interviews between the dance teacher and the assistant principal regarding funding and curriculum. The dance teacher expressed challenges related to student engagement, especially in elective courses, funding limitations for transportation, which limited community involvement, and the need for additional certified teachers. The assistant principal discussed other challenges concerning funding, arts integration in core content areas, teacher retention, and administrative turnover.





Implications

Presented are implications of the findings, including questions for reflection. This list is not exhaustive. Rather, it represents some of the implications, which emerged across the schools.

1. All of the schools have minimal fine arts requirements. School staff differ in their perspectives regarding fine arts requirements. Based on the interview data, what are possible advantages and disadvantages to increasing the number of required fine arts courses? Similarly, when schools lack electives, students must take fine arts courses. How do fine arts choices vs. requirements affect student engagement, funding allocation, professional development, scheduling, and more?
2. Once a fine arts class is established, the availability of curriculum and the implementation of existing curriculum varies across schools. What are the expectations regarding arts curriculum? Without an established curriculum, what strategies and resources do teachers have for designing and implementing curriculum across the state?
3. Similar to curriculum, professional development participation and opportunities vary across the state. What role does the school and district play (if any) in providing and/or locating content-specific professional development opportunities?
4. Schools are challenged by staffing issues (e.g., difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff and administrators). How can schools effectively recruit and retain teachers and administrators? Without certified fine arts teachers, how can schools capitalize on community resources?
5. Community members are involved in fine arts programs in a variety of ways. In some schools, community members are involved differently, depending upon the program (e.g., art vs. music). What goals do schools have regarding community member involvement? What are the differences between outreach to the community vs. community member support in the classrooms and/or for the school? How can schools increase, maximize, and sustain community member involvement?

6. Integrating the arts in other content areas appears to depend upon teacher training and collaboration with other teachers. Although content area teachers receive collaborative planning time, fine arts teachers are typically not included and often have distinct planning time. If arts integration is an important goal, how can schools adjust teacher schedules and professional development differently?
7. Funding constraints are present in all of the schools, which has affected staffing, courses offered, supplies, transportation, and opportunities. At one of the schools, an art teacher offers an innovative idea for overcoming funding challenges – engaging students in a t-shirt screen printing business for the school. A teacher from another school discussed the possibility of creating a booster club. How can other schools overcome funding limitations with innovative ideas?
8. Multiple equity issues related to fine arts emerged in the interviews, including reduced planning time for fine arts teachers, the lack of transportation for fine arts students compared to athletes, the lack of recognition by the state for fine arts students, and the lack of content-specific professional development. How can schools, districts, and the state address these issues?
9. In some of the interviews, administrators and fine arts teachers provided different perspectives on important issues (e.g., curriculum, staffing, community involvement). Further, some administrators are unsure about questions related to the fine arts (e.g., curriculum, instruction, and assessment). Why do administrators and fine arts teachers in the same school have different understandings of the fine arts? What are the consequences to a lack of shared understanding? What strategies can facilitate communications between fine arts teachers and administrators?

-
1. www.quavermusic.com
 2. www.artsattack.com
 3. Marzano, R.J. (2009). *The art and science of teaching. Helping students process information*. Retrieved from www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct09/vol67/num02/Helping-Students-Process-Information.aspx
 4. Edwards, B. (2012). *Drawing on the right side of the brain*. New York: Tarcher Perigee

Appendix A

Principal Interview Questions:

1. How many fine arts classes do you offer at your school?
2. How many fine arts teachers work at your school?
3. How many fine arts classes can students take at one time? Per semester? Per year?
4. How often do fine arts classes meet?
 - For how many minutes?
5. How many students are enrolled in each class?
 - Obtain student enrollment by racial and ethnic diversity and students with disabilities
6. Is arts content aligned with other content areas (e.g., STEAM)?
 - If so, please explain how.
7. What are the minimum qualifications of your fine arts teachers?
8. Do your fine arts teachers have professional development requirements specific to their content area?
 - If so, describe professional development opportunities.
9. What curriculum do you use for your school's fine arts program?
 - How did you choose the curriculum?
10. How are community members/organizations/local artists/universities and/or colleges involved in your fine arts program? (Probe for examples – working artists, community partners, artists in residence programs)
11. To what extent does your fine arts program include opportunities for students to experience diverse cultures?
12. What are the minimum requirements for your district? Does your fine arts program exceed the minimum requirements for fine arts programs?
 - If so, please explain.
13. How did you create your fine arts program?
 - If applicable, describe the process you underwent for obtaining state approval for your program?
 - How did you choose the courses?
14. How did you obtain funding for your fine arts program?
15. How do you sustain funding for your fine arts program?

16. How do teachers assess students in their fine arts classes? Is the assessment process standardized?
 - What types of formative assessments do they use?
 - What types of summative assessments do they use?
17. What objectives do these assessments measure?
18. How are teachers using assessment to measure success? How are they using assessment data to adapt instruction?
 - Please provide examples of assessments
19. How do you measure the success of your fine arts program?
20. What's working really well in your fine arts program?
 - Why do you think this is occurring?
 - What evidence supports these outcomes?
21. What challenges have you encountered in your fine arts program?
22. How have you addressed these challenges?
23. What additional supports do you need for your fine arts program?
 - District-level supports?
 - State supports?
24. Do you anticipate any changes next year in the fine arts courses your school offers? (Probe for goals; funding implications)
25. Is there anything else you would like to share about what makes your school's fine arts program successful?

Fine Arts Teacher Interview Questions:

1. What fine arts course(s) do you teach?
2. What is your educational background?
3. How long have you taught fine arts at this school? Other schools?
4. What professional development have you received for your current position? (list, probe for what is arts-related and what is not)
5. How often do you participate in professional development?
6. Is arts content aligned with other content areas (e.g., STEAM)?
7. How are community members/organizations/local artists/universities and/or colleges involved in your fine arts program? (Probe for examples –working artists, community partners, artists in residence programs)
8. To what extent does your fine arts program include opportunities for students to experience diverse cultures?
9. What curriculum do you use for the classes you teach?
 - How did you choose the curriculum?
10. How do you design lessons?
11. How do you ensure lessons meet the state standards?
12. How are you assessing students?
 - What types of formative assessments do you use?
 - What types of summative assessments do you use?
13. What objectives do these assessments measure?
14. How are you using assessment to measure success? How are you using assessment data to adapt instruction? Please provide examples of assessments.
15. How do you measure the success of your classes and the fine arts program in general?
16. What's working really well in your classes and the fine arts program?
 - Why do you think this is occurring?
 - What evidence supports these outcomes?
17. What challenges have you encountered in your classes and the fine arts program?
18. How have you addressed these challenges?

19. What additional supports do you need for your classes and the fine arts program?
 - District-level supports?
 - State supports?
20. Do you anticipate any changes next year in the fine arts courses your school offers? (Probe for goals; funding implications)
21. Is there anything else you would like to share about what makes your fine arts program successful?

