

Student Outcomes: Identifying the End Before We Begin

*A word from the principal,
Amy Wadsworth*

It has been almost six years since “No Child Left Behind” passed through the federal legislature. Each year since then, meeting core standards and making annual progress has been under a microscope. As part of this, our students are measured by both of the above criteria as well as standardized tests. But to quote a classic song, “is that all there is?” At the Salt Lake Arts Academy, we don’t think so. We want much more than passing the core tests.

Now that our moving boxes are unpacked and we enjoy a sense of permanence, we are able to start directing our energy toward a scrutiny of what we want our students to accomplish. When they leave the Arts Academy after four years, what deeper understandings do we want them to have? What will they know? What will they appreciate? What will they be able to do? And with these questions comes the ultimate question: how will WE know what they have learned?

The teachers and governing board members met earlier this month to begin answering these questions. We know what our mission statement says: “...to teach all our students to become thoughtful, capable contributors to the world community...to launch young learners who will now and in the future take responsibility for shaping society’s decisions and designs.”

But how do these ideas translate into the everyday expectations of regular school? To begin with, we have identified that in order for students to have “society shaping” ability, they need to experience an educational process that

- integrates all content areas;
- demands self-evaluation and reflection;
- guides global understanding.

We are very proud of our performance on the state tests. We know that our students are able to measure up to the basics and far exceed the state average. At the Arts Academy, however, we think of this as baseline learning. Our assessments and learning experiences need to go far beyond the regurgitation of concepts and facts. Each project and activity should be an exercise towards a deeper understanding, building necessary skills and demanding a more analytical way of thinking.

This year we will be looking very closely at how we document our students’ deeper understanding, their ability to make connections to the real world, and their awareness of personal growth and refinement.

We have begun our own reflective process to determine how we will guide our students toward integration, reflection, and understanding. Over the course of the school year, our goal is to build a set of standards across all disciplines and subject areas that will set the bar for our students to achieve. Once the standards are developed, our task will be to select the best way of measuring what our students have achieved. As the year unfolds, we hope that you will be able to recognize our work toward these goals. It is a complex and exciting process. And ultimately, it will be what sets us apart.

A Circle of Friends: Salt Lake Arts Academy Annual Giving Campaign

by Katy Andrews

In the nonprofit world, when an organization needs to raise funds, it turns first to its immediate “circle of friends,” those clients, patrons or stakeholders most immediately affected by its programs and projects. The theory is that if those closest to an organization are financially supportive of its work, then the broader circle of community will see that support as an endorsement of the organization’s effectiveness. At SLArts, we are turning to our families, administration, and governing board.

Charter schools only receive about 85% of the funding received by other public

Continued on page 3

Math/Science Teacher Spotlight

by Sarah Sandberg

This is **DAN ARMSTRONG**'s third year at SLArts. He taught math in elementary and junior high and was the mascot for the former Utah Starzz. He grew up in



Schenectady, New York, where his older brother liked to pretend he was a teacher. Dan's brother would make books about whatever he was learning—math, Spanish, etc.—and teach him. Dan likes teaching here because of the math programs: "They really make you think." He would love to see his students enjoy math and think that it's easy. He loves the movie *Mrs. Doubtfire* because of Robin Williams' performance.

When SLArts opened four years ago, **ELAINE CLARK** taught all the science



classes. Now she teaches after-school science enrichment and coaches the Science Olympiad

Team. Before SLArts, she designed and taught science enrichment. Elaine has always been interested in science and nature. Growing up in rural Georgia, she played and explored in the woods and streams. She came to Utah to do graduate research in ecology at the University of Utah. She likes teaching at SLArts

because the students are creative and enthusiastic, and she gets to do art. She wants students to learn that science is fun and useful in their everyday lives. Her favorite movie is *It's a Wonderful Life*. Her favorite T.V. show is *NOVA*: "Fascinating, 'wow' science shows each week!"

DAN ROSE grew up in New Sweden, Idaho. From his front porch he couldn't see another house, only potato fields, lava flows, buttes, and barns. Before coming to SLArts three years ago, he helped open a



new school in Nampa, Idaho. He came to Utah so his wife could attend medical school at the University of Utah. He got interested

in math and science because they are tools to help answer his questions. He likes teaching at SLArts because of its emphasis on creativity and the hands-on approach. He likes helping kids have "aha" moments. His favorite movie is *The Great Escape* with Steve McQueen: "It's got prisoners of war, tunnel digging, executions, planes, motorcycles, espionage. I mean, come on, who doesn't like this stuff?"

ANN SIMMS has been teaching at SLArts since it opened four years ago. Before that she taught math at a variety of elementary, middle, and high schools; coached bas-

ketball; consulted for a textbook company; and raised her three children. Her interest in math started in middle school



with great teachers. She grew up in California and moved here for her husband's job. She likes teaching at SLArts

because of the longer class periods and small groups. She likes teaching a well-connected, integrated, fun program with community support. She hopes her students will make connections from math class to the real world. Her favorite movie is *The Thief and the Cobbler*.

This is **JENI WHITE**'s first year at SLArts, and she's loving it.

She moved to Utah three years ago to work as an avian educator at the Tracy Aviary. She traveled



the state showing cool birds to students and groups. Her love of science and the outdoors began early. By age four in Indiana she had spent a lot of time at the top of her apple tree. She moved to Utah to finally live near the man in her life. She hopes her students will never stop asking questions and analyzing the answers: "We are all scientists." Her favorite movie is *The Princess Bride*.

Where Your Donation Dollars Go in 2006-2007

\$30,000	Add the 10th humanities class to our schedule in order to reduce class size
\$28,150	Provide foreign language instruction (teachers, materials, and supplies)
\$12,000	New and upgraded technology
\$11,000	Retain excellent teachers; provide bonuses and professional development
\$11,000	Books and other classroom reading materials to achieve literacy across the curriculum
\$6,500	Coordinating Seasoned Mentors of the Arts (SMARTS)

\$2,515	Resident playwright and dramaturge to provide student and faculty training
\$2,200	Purchase sound equipment; digital cameras; instruments
\$2,000	Visual arts supplies; materials for classes and exhibitions
\$1,500	Performing arts materials; supplies for classes
\$1,000	Underwrite activities/fieldtrips for 40 students @ \$25 each
\$15,500	UTA passes; educational materials and activities for 5th and 6th grade students
Total = \$123,365	

A Circle of...continued from page 1

schools in Utah. The remainder of our operating budget must be raised through private and corporate support; this year's total fundraising goal is \$124,000. Our Annual Campaign is only one way we seek this funding.

Our goal for the campaign is \$33,000, of which almost \$25,000 has already been pledged or collected thanks to many of our generous parents. Your gift this year will support our school in many ways.

While reaching our goal of \$33,000 is important, the more important aspect of our campaign is participation. By being able to tell the outside community that 100% of our governing board, 100% of our administration and 100% of our parents donated to our Annual Campaign, we send a powerful message that our internal community believes in what the Salt Lake Arts Academy provides to its students. Currently, fifteen percent of our families have made a gift to the Annual Campaign. Gifts of all sizes are necessary and valuable to us in achieving our goal of 100% participation. There are many ways to make a gift—we can bill you monthly or quarterly, or you can charge your gift monthly or quarterly on your credit card.

Again, our hope is that every family will be able to participate at the level of giving that is comfortable for them. Your gift, whatever the amount, will help us meet our goal. Please take a minute to consider the value you place on the unique middle school education your child is receiving. Fill out the pledge card in this newsletter. Your participation is critical to helping us build and grow our "circle of friends!"

SLArts Students Land On Their Feet in High School *by Liz O'Brien*

For those of us with 8th graders this year, it is time to turn our attention to decisions about high school. As phrases like "open window," "open house," "level test," and "IB program" acquire new meaning, we also wonder how well our SLArts graduates fare in transition to high school.

I contacted several of our June '06 graduates who began this year at various high schools in the area, and asked how they found the fit of their new school. Did the SLArts experience prepare them well? Did they have a comment or warning they'd like to throw out to this year's grads?



Oliver Diamond's nervousness about starting high school was tempered by having SLArts friends who joined him at Judge Memorial this year. The most unexpected new course content for him was religion, and he has to work harder now preparing for tests than he did at SLArts. Oliver reports that teachers are accessible to students and responsive. Oliver is delighted with the higher level of sports participation that awaited him at high school. Eighth graders, "Be sure you're organized for every class!"

Zoey Martin-Lockhart reports from Rowland Hall, alone among last year's SLArts grads. Rowland Hall is also small, and Zoey is one of only 17 new members in her class of 80 students. Academic course work at Rowland Hall is meant to challenge the most able students, and this leaves less time for other things, such as art classes. Zoey felt well-prepared by

SLArts homework demands to meet the new demands at RH, and has already adapted to studying for tests, including the dreaded "finals." Zoey felt especially well-prepared for her math classes.

Zoey has found the most challenging aspect of high school to be finding a fit among friends.

Rowan Eyzaguirre left SLArts and headed to Highland High. He began in the SPA (School of Performing Arts), then moved into the fine arts program. He is very happy with his choice of Highland, where he is able to pursue art foundations and 3D drawing together with his 9th grade curriculum in language arts, biology, and first year algebra. Rowan expected high school math to be much harder than he found it, and attributes this happy surprise to his math courses at SLArts.

Heather McLean is one of three SLArts grads who started at East High this year. Her first impression of East was, "It's HUGE!" Everything about the place was gigantic compared to SLArts. She found the size and anonymity of it shocking, and the age-graded social structure confusing at first. Although she has yet to set a foot on



some of East's acreage, she has reconnected with former SLArts students in all grades, and that has helped to make East seem more familiar.

To the extent that our students' histories at SLArts accounts for their success, it looks like our school is right on track.

FUND RAISING

	GOALS (100% donating)	PROGRESS TO DATE (15% donating)
Registration Donations	\$15,500	\$15,500
Sally Foster	\$7,000	\$7,055
Annual Campaign	\$33,000	\$24,685
Gala	\$30,000	
Grants	\$30,000	\$5,500
Other	\$7,865	\$6,603
TOTAL:	\$123,365	\$59,343

SCIENCE: It's an Art! It's a Sport!

by Jan Stucki Wilson

At SLArts Academy science is a fun, hands-on, artistic method for understanding the world. Here's a look at what we're doing in class, and what opportunities we have outside of class.

What's Happening in Class

Our **5th graders** are studying the physical world: matter and how it changes. It can happen in big, visible ways like erosion, earthquakes, and volcanoes, or invisible ways like magnetism. They see how it all ties to our theme, "Pushing Past Barriers," when they look at early barrier-breaking scientists like Michael Faraday and Ben Franklin.

The **6th graders** are looking at the bigger picture as well as the smaller one. They started the year by going to the moon, the solar system, and the constellations, and finding out where we fit in the scale and size of the universe. They're meeting Galileo and Copernicus on the way. Then they'll come back to Earth and study energy, sound, and light, "the things that Isaac Newton discovered," says Mr. Rose.

The **7th grade** is taking on the whole universe as well. In the week before Thanksgiving they built a "field trip" to the center of the earth out in the parking lot. Each student was assigned a layer, from outer space to the earth's core. They took the 5th grade on a guided tour of the known universe.

Eighth grade is studying human impact on the environment. Their study is built around the city's application to make our school an e2 (environmentally sustainable) business. Each student is assigned a part of the process; they're talking with grounds people and janitors, and making

recommendations to the school. Get ready for them to start applying their remedies to your home as well.

COMPETITIONS

Science Olympiad. The Science Olympiad is a national competition. Each year there are 26 different events featuring all of the sciences. For example, students may design a glider and launch it from a balloon, make predictions about the solar system, or build a musical instrument and describe the scientific principles that make it work. Working with a partner, students gain a deep understanding of the event(s) they're competing in, and try out their understanding in a fun environment.

Coach Elaine Clark will be working with the students after school, and she has high expectations for our team this year. Last year every one of our students placed; we had four first place medals, and our school won the good sportsmanship award!

There is a pin competition open to all students, on the team or not. Every student on a Science Olympiad team will be given a pin to wear. Each school can submit one design for the Utah pin. All the designs are put on the Science Olympiad Web site and the students vote on which one to reproduce. The pins need the following:

- a science-related design
- the words Utah, Science Olympiad, and 2007
- only a few colors so it can be easily reproduced

The pins will be 1 1/8" across. Designs are due in January. Check with Elaine Clark for details.



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