

# The Art of Understanding... *A word from the principal, Amy Wadsworth*

Over the next two months, you should hear a great deal around your dinner table about the Gala, a four letter word that begins to dominate our school focus once January arrives. The Gala is much more than a splashy event. It is one of the most exciting and authentic activities in your student's education. On March 15 and 16, all of our students will present an original production that draws from the content of their humanities and arts classes: the study of the major events spanning the 14th–18th centuries in the Western world.



Understanding is much more than learning facts or accomplishing fun activities. Educational best practices describe it as the ability to explain, interpret, apply, show perspective and empathize. The Gala becomes our evidence that this deeper understanding has taken place.

Since the beginning of the school year, our humanities and arts teachers worked with playwright Julie Jensen and dramaturg Michael Dorrell from the Salt Lake Acting Company. Funded through a grant from VSA of Utah, Julie and Mike worked with the teachers to understand effective



playwriting and how it could be used to get at a deeper understanding of human character. From each workshop, the teachers returned to their classes and practiced what they had learned

with their students. They use drama to interpret a short piece of fiction, explore the feelings and motives of the people whose lives were destroyed with a devastating event, and create an original story that is drawn from real life.

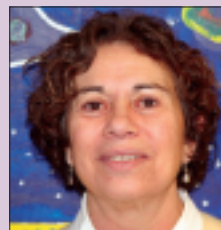
In December, teams of student writers from each humanities class spent a day with Julie and Mike, practicing the same techniques based on stories and ideas that had been workshopped in their classes. When we returned from winter break, all of our students were placed in groups to decide the most interesting and compelling stories we should tell for our gala. Out of these we selected five.

In mid-January, the student writers and arts producers workshopped over several days together to develop their assigned story. The requirements were laid out: their story must have a conflict that was compelling; the story must be factual, even if fictitious; they must consider how to apply music and dance to tell this story; it had to involve large groups; and it had to address one of the identified barriers. No small task!

Julie and Mike returned for one more workshop to fine tune each of the five acts. They were amazed at the depth of the thought-provoking stories that the students had developed!

I am so excited about these incredible stories! There is an energy that is filling our school as students prepare the music and dance, design and create the props and sets, practice lines, and develop believable characters. It is the kind of learning that engages students and asks them to reflect, interpret, and create. It is the kind of learning that offers them an opportunity to place themselves into the lives of people they have studied. It is the kind of learning that leaves them with the deepest form of understanding.

## Daphne Williams Joins SLArts as Development Director *by Katy Andrews*



Daphne Williams, formerly the director of the Salt Lake Education Foundation, has joined the Salt Lake Arts Academy as Development Director. Daphne spent the last 21 years working for the Salt Lake School District, first as director

of community volunteers and school/business partnerships, and for the last ten years also serving as director of the Salt Lake Education Foundation where she raised

*Continued on page 4*

# IOWA Standardized Test Results Reveal Arts Academy's Strengths in 5th & 8th Grader



by Amy Wadsworth

As a public school, the Salt Lake Arts Academy is required to participate in all State testing. This past October, our 5th and 8th graders took the IOWA basic skills test along with all public school students in Utah and across the nation. Once again, the results show that we have some exceptional students at our school and that the longer they are with us, the stronger their performance becomes.

This is a standardized test, which means it is a common instrument that reflects normed student performance. Being at the 50th percentile means that you are right in the average range and on grade level. So when we look at our composite results, our 5th graders performed better than 79% of students their age. The 8th graders performed better than 83% of their peers!

This year's 8th graders include 17 students who started with us four years ago! All of these 17 students performed well above grade average! Students who performed the least well are those who have been at the Arts Academy for the shortest amount of time.

	Statewide Percentile Ranks for the 5th grade	Arts Academy Percentile Ranks for the 5th grade	Statewide Percentile Ranks for the 8th grade	Arts Academy Percentile Ranks for the 8th grade
Reading	63	78	62	90
Language	58	71	53	74
Mathematics	59	65	57	74
Core Total	59	73	57	81
Social Studies	61	78	52	75
Science	70	84	65	88
<b>Total Composite</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>83</b>



## DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

by Daphne Williams

Thank you so much to all of our SLArts families who have contributed to our Annual Campaign. We have made terrific progress toward our goal of \$33,000. To date we have over \$30,000 pledged and collected. We are very, very close!

As a public school we are always sensitive to the fact that not every family can make financial donations at the same level, yet we hope each family can find a way to make some sort of donation. To date, approximately one-fourth of our families have contributed to the Annual Campaign. Our goal is to have 100% of our families participating. The more families that contribute, in any amount, the stronger the message we send to our community that parents support this school. And the stronger the message we send of support, the easier it is to garner contributions from the greater community.

As you know, we must raise 15% of our yearly operating expenses, or about \$134,000, through fundraising. The \$33,000 Annual Campaign is one step toward reaching that overall goal. We hope you will consider a donation in any amount—it's not too late! You can mail a check, drop your donation at the front desk, give us your credit card number, or contact me about an installment plan. All donations are tax-deductible.

Also, if you work for a company that contributes to non-profit organizations, please let them know about the Salt Lake Arts Academy or let us help you tell them about our school. Many companies will match your donation. As the new Director of Development, I am looking forward to getting to know you and your children as we work together to accomplish our fundraising goal. Please feel free to stop by my office or call me at 531-1173 if I can answer any questions.

# The Grand Finale: Eighth Grade Art Projects

by Jan Stucki Wilson

One of the great features of the SL Arts Academy is its focus on the artistic development of the student over four years. The culmination of this development has become the 8th grade art project, first started last year. The project is designed to help students bring together what they've learned in an original and creative way. When they graduate they'll have a real accomplishment to take with them.



Each 8th grader will choose his or her own project. Students can choose any medium they have experience with. Many will choose music, visual art, dance, or drama as they have studied it here. It's also possible to bring in skills they have experience with

from elsewhere, or to combine more than one medium. Examples of projects a student might choose could be choreographing a dance for a group of students that illustrates a historical or social movement; an architectural drawing of a building in our community; a drawing, sculpture, or musical performance representing one of the styles or periods studied; an original play or song; or an illustrated story.



Much of the work on these projects will be done during their last quarter art classes. What's different this year is that they'll start thinking about

them sooner. Starting this week, 8th graders will be asked to consider the artists, performers, and artistic movements that have inspired them. They'll think through what medium they want to work in, and what they want to accomplish. Then when next term starts, they should be able to start working right away.

Once they have a sense of what they're doing, they'll be assigned to work with the teacher most experienced in the art form they're using. Every week during April and May they'll check in with the teacher to show their progress and get feedback. The project is due May 30.

In their years at the Salt Lake Arts Academy, the 8th graders have had great opportunities to experience and learn about all kinds of arts. This is a terrific opportunity for them to show what they've learned, what's inspired them, and who they are.



## Science and Math Competition

by Liz O'Brien

### SCIENCE OLYMPIAD 2007

What do earwigs, chewing lice, and heredity have to do with wheeled vehicles and bottle rockets? Why are students at SLArts storming castles, building towers, and mapping food webs? It's not for the gala, and they are not bringing to stage their worst nightmares. It's Science Olympiad prep time! Our home team of 15 contenders, lead by the intrepid scientist, Elaine Clark, began preparing a few weeks ago. They meet every Friday afternoon, often with specialists from the University of Utah, to prepare for 20 events. Our team is looking fit and formidable for the state competition to be held March 31 at Weber State. Last week's Science Olympiad pin contest kicked the season off with a winning design from Kurt Bruns.

### MATHCOUNTS 2007

Calling all Algebra students—you know who you are—get your algebraic syntax in order, and sharpen your pencils. Mathcounts is about to begin. All algebra students will compete in the first round next week in class. After another round or so, Dan Armstrong will have a carefully honed team of 10 who will compete regionally at the University of Utah in mid-February. Competitors are asked to find answers to difficult math questions very quickly. The team gets to wake up very early on a Saturday morning, eat free pizza, and take home a stylish T-shirt. Winners get college scholarships. Good luck to all, and go team SLArts!

# Sneak Peak at the Gala

by Sarah Sandberg

After a flurry of student writing, re-writing in workshops, and additional fine-tuning, we have a working script for the gala. The process started weeks ago when groups of students developed a number of possible stories. Students then voted and the five most popular were selected for production. Each of these stories will make up one of the five major scenes of the gala.

The narratives, conflicts, and settings were derived from the students' studies throughout this year. Our own Chris Lee took the five stories and did some refining to ensure historical accuracy, and expanded some scenes to include more characters. The scenes will be presented in historical order.

**SCENE ONE** is set in a village devastated by the plague in 1350. The desperate villager need someone to blame. They find their scapegoat in one ethnic group and try to exterminate those people. One child escapes the execution, but death follows her to the next village.



**SCENE TWO** involves Lorenzo DeMedici. Many artists including da Vinci and Michelangelo propose their works to the famous benefactor. But the priest Savonarola warns that humans are putting themselves at mortal risk with their devotion to art. He preaches that the people are seeking to elevate themselves above God. His solution is the bonfire of the vanities.



**SCENE THREE** takes place in the court of Charles the 1st of Spain in 1520. He challenges French and Portuguese explorers to a contest. Who can bring back the most wealth for the motherland?

**SCENE FOUR** brings us to Queen Mary and her efforts to reconvert the people to Catholicism. One Protestant child faces a struggle of loyalty. He wonders if he should obey the law or be true to his family.

**THE FINAL SCENE** depicts a class conflict in France. Louis XIV has led his court to the height of excess at Versailles. Gypsies and the nobles come together for a rare shared experience with art. But the nobles shudder at the gypsies' dire predictions.

Over 90 students have a hand in each story. For each scene, two humanities classes make up the cast; a music class contributes the music; a dance class contributes the dance; and a visual arts class contributes the art. Every Salt Lake Arts Academy student is in one humanities class and one arts class. In this way, each student is a cast member for one scene and a contributing artist for a second scene.

You can imagine this is a logistical as well as artistic challenge for cast, artists, and faculty. It promises to be a wonderful learning opportunity for all involved. We eagerly await the final product!

*Daphne Williams...continued from page 1*

funds and sought partnerships with businesses and the philanthropic community. Daphne's depth of experience will be very helpful as we continue to seek additional funding for SLArts programs and projects.

Daphne is a native of Akron, Ohio. She graduated with a B.S. in Zoology from Columbia University in New York, where she met her husband, Greg Williams. Daphne says, "Medical research was where I was heading when I met my husband while he was a student at Columbia College. I worked at Columbia University Community Affairs office while Greg was in law school at Columbia. We settled in Salt Lake, where Greg is from originally. My love for New York has never waned." Daphne and Greg have three children and "three and a quarter delicious grandchildren." She adds, "I am very impressed with the Salt Lake Arts Academy and the strong education provided here. It is a refreshing place. The staff is terrific and cares greatly for the students." *We all welcome Daphne to SLArts!*

## 5th Grade Snapshot

In a past issue we reviewed where our 8th grades go when they leave SLArts. You might also be curious about the source of our 59 terrific 5th graders.

**Type of School:** 55 public school / 4 private school

**School District:** 43 Salt Lake/10 Granite/4 Jordan/2 Davis

**Zip Code:** 17 in 84103/12 in 84105/5 in 84102/ 3 or less in all others

**Gender:** 41 girls/18 boys

**Siblings:** 22 have siblings at SLArts