

Reflections on “Reviving Arts Education Through Collaboration”

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Since [my *CultureWork* broadside](#) appeared, Sarasota’s Community/Schools Partnership (C/SPA) has gained strength, reinforcing my belief in the value of community/school collaboration. According to Nancy Roucher of the Arts Education Task Force for the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota, long-range planning is balanced with two or three specific yearly goals (personal communication, 12/14/2016). Community programs funded through local foundations and national initiatives for arts education enrich curriculum-based arts instruction from qualified specialist teachers—including seven dance teachers.

C/SPA has a liaison in each school to distribute information and share resources with faculty. An annual arts in education leadership award supports a teacher’s personal growth or classroom project. Local foundations fund the award, grants for teachers, and EdExploreSRQ, a web-based search platform for experiential arts resources aligned with curriculum standards (<http://edexploresrq.com/about-edexploresrq/> accessed 1/3/2017). C/SPA community leaders offer help to schools, interviewing the superintendent, other central administrators, and principals about how the arts fit into priorities, programs, and issues.

Sarasota was the sixth site selected to participate in the Kennedy Center’s Ensuring the Arts for Any Given Child program, designed to assist communities in planning expanded, equitable access to arts education for all K-8 students. Sarasota’s Any Given Child project received a major grant from the federal Department of Education for a four-year arts integration

initiative, bringing new positions to work with Title 1 schools and a second voice for arts education at the district office.

Of the nine factors that contributed to the success of C/SPA in 2001, three seem most significant for continued growth: inclusion, communication, and persistence. In Sarasota County, arts education is for all children; all teachers and administrators are stakeholders with parents and staff from community arts and cultural organizations. The arts extend beyond traditional fine arts to include global art traditions as well as local artists. While curriculum-based arts education is grounded within the county school district, multiple voices advocate full access to all the arts for all learners. Regular meetings provide opportunities for discussion, planning, recognition, and reminding the community of the importance of the arts. Leaders have retained the mission and vision created when C/SPA began; they remain on message as new administrators enter the district.

Just before I was asked to write this response, I was invited to join an art and music curriculum research committee for my local school district. Music and visual arts teachers, with university music and art educators are beginning to write standards-based arts curricula, as Sarasota County had done earlier. During the first two meetings, our agenda included reviewing the current National Core Arts Standards (NCCAS, 2014) in order to adopt them as broad goals for the district's arts curricula. As I participate in this planning cycle, I reflect on how particular districts and communities might balance national frameworks with attention to local strengths, open communication, and persistence in strengthening arts education for all learners.

[494 words]