



STEP-Lively Arts Collaboration to Promote the Arts in Elementary Classrooms

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Abstract



This project seeks to improve arts opportunities for local elementary school children by providing teachers and STEP teacher candidates with sustained professional development in arts education. This project builds collaborations and taps resources across campus, bridging the pedagogical knowledge of the STEP Elementary program in the School of Education with existing Lively Arts programs and the artistic experience of students in the Stanford arts departments. In this program elementary classroom teachers, STEP teacher candidates, and arts students learn how to integrate the arts into the elementary curriculum by collaborating to develop an arts program for elementary school children. Bringing this program to STEP teacher candidates and their cooperating teachers extends the high quality performances and professional development programs already provided by Lively Arts to a wider audience of children and teachers. In doing so, it provides richer arts opportunities to children who attend schools lacking these vital resources.

Education Challenge

Children need an education that will encourage creativity, innovative thinking and aesthetic valuing, which come from experiences in the arts. Unfortunately, education policy over the past several decades has diminished the place of the arts in California schools. This decline has caused a gap in arts training for teachers, resulting in an elementary school teaching force that is ill-equipped to provide quality arts experiences for students. A recent study of elementary school teachers in California found that Multiple Subjects credentialing programs inadequately prepare teachers to provide arts instruction. "Lack of time in credential programs, lack of opportunities to practice teaching the arts, and declining enrollment in undergraduate arts courses are the major challenges to preparing elementary classroom teachers." When they enter the classroom, these teachers have little access to professional development in the arts. "About one-fourth of teachers participated in any arts-related professional development in the last year, and three-quarters reported that the lack of professional development is a barrier to their delivery of arts education" (Guha, et al, 2008).

Project Goals

The goals of this project include the following:

- Foster in educators an appreciation of the role the arts play in education and society.
- Promote dialogue between teachers and artists that improves arts experiences that are provided for children.
- Increase the effectiveness of teachers' arts instruction by strengthening their arts content knowledge, to help enable them to pass on an appreciation of the arts as an important part of learning and life to their elementary students.
- Increase prospective teaching artists' pedagogical content knowledge and capacity to provide educative arts experiences for elementary school children.



Photos provided by Lively Arts

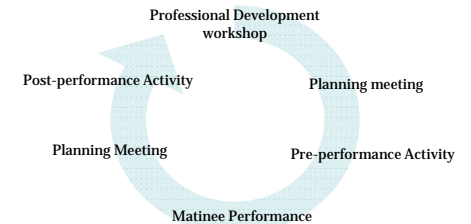
Evidence

To understand the impact of this program and measure our progress towards these goals, we are conducting an ongoing evaluation of the program, using surveys, interviews and documentation of all events and activities. The evaluation starts with a baseline snapshot of teacher perspectives on the arts in their schools. Data collected throughout the program will guide future development of the STEP-Lively Arts collaboration, and will serve as the foundation for a longitudinal study of the impact of sustained professional development in the arts.

Project Design

This program facilitates elementary educators through the process of planning and implementing art activities for children, using arts education expertise from the School of Education and Lively Arts. We are doing this by creating triads consisting of teachers, STEP teacher candidates and Stanford undergraduate arts students who are enrolled in an arts education seminar. These triads work together to develop an arts program for elementary school students around a Lively Arts matinee performance.

Triads participate in a performance cycle that begins with a professional development workshop provided by teaching artists from the performance group. Following the workshop, triads meet to prepare and implement a pre-performance activity for their elementary students, attend the performance with their class, then meet again to prepare and implement a post-performance activity for their students. The pre-performance activity will prepare students for the performance, and the post-performance activity will serve as follow up to further integrate the content of the performance into the classroom.



Future Directions

The long-term goal of this initiative is to provide ongoing performance cycles in connection with the Lively Arts Matinee Performance Program, so that teachers, teacher candidates, and prospective teaching artists can participate in multiple cycles and further develop their capacity to provide high quality arts experiences for children.

This initiative is also designed to be extended in scale locally, and could be used as a model for other institutions or regions as well.



Guha, R., Woodworth, K., Kim, D., Malin, H. and Park, J. (2008). An unfinished canvas: Teacher preparation, instructional delivery, and professional development in the arts. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.