



Flocktown-Kossmann Elementary,
Long Valley, New Jersey

Train from

Within

Teacher-led professional development creates common understanding.

Every principal is familiar with the scenario—outside experts lead a training session, but teachers’ energy and inspiration evaporate shortly after the trainers’ van pulls out of the parking lot. Principals can make sure that the momentum is not lost by including teachers in the delivery of professional development.

“If we want art integrated into all curriculum areas on a daily basis, this can’t be something so ‘special’ that it has to be delivered by an external

expert,” says Elaine Meeks, principal of Cherry Valley Elementary School in Polson, Montana. “The real power is having our teachers become the experts on how to infuse art into their lessons—they should know it so well that they teach each other.”

That is the reason Champion Creatively Alive Children (CCAC) professional development resources were created and why the materials are available for free—to empower teacher leaders to teach their colleagues. The videos, facilitator guides,

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—**CINDY TODD**, art education program chair at Ferris State University in Michigan



LEFT: Flocktown-Kossmann Elementary, Long Valley, New Jersey; **CENTER AND RIGHT:** Silverton Paideia Academy, Cincinnati, Ohio

presentation slides, and hands-on art experiences were shaped around schools’ success stories, and document innovative practices that can inspire other educators to infuse art across the curriculum. Integrated into this program is an understanding that every school will have unique needs, so the materials are flexible—an à la carte menu—which makes them easy to customize. What follows are tips from educators on how they have used these resources.

Small-Group Activities. At Jane Phillips Elementary School in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, the CCAC resources were used in “learning stations” for a round-robin professional development session. One station was established for each of the four C’s—creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration—and small

groups rotated to each station where teacher leaders guided hands-on activities. The collaborative tower-building exercise, for example, helped teachers realize that if they didn’t discuss their roles and goals before they started building, the towers tumbled. “This was a great, tangible metaphor that helped them understand why teams need to plan together,” says principal Sandra Kent.

Enhanced Partnerships. By sharing the resources with community partners, principals can help establish a uniform approach to arts integration. Gordon Campbell, principal of École St. Avila Elementary School in Winnipeg, Canada, shared the CCAC videos and guides with educators throughout his community. As a result, the Winnipeg Art Gallery now uses them in arts-integration workshops across the

Manitoba province. His school also provided the resources to its partner school in China. “The art experiences in the program transcend language barriers and became a great way to connect with educators in China,” Campbell explains.

Inservice Training. Using the materials during districtwide training “is a fantastic opportunity to engage educators in hands-on, arts-infused, standards-based learning experiences,” says Samantha Melvin, art teacher at RJ Richey Elementary School in Burnet, Texas. She, along with principal Jill Wittekiend and assistant principal Kim Grebe, shared the CCAC training with educators during the inservice week before the beginning of the school year.

Customized Workshops. The resources are easy to tailor, so you



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can enhance workshops with ease. For example, Elaine Schaffner, art teacher in Westwood, Massachusetts, used the CCAC materials as the basis for a five-week workshop series for teachers. The district sought teacher-led professional development sessions, and Schaffner saw this content as perfectly suited to the theme, "21st Century Readiness." She said the CCAC program was easy for her to customize, enabling her to add her voice to the presentation materials.

Critical Thinking Clarified. The resources help teachers and administrators share a vocabulary and talk about what the arts contribute to student learning. "A lot of people have a vague idea of what higher-order thinking is, but they don't have enough information to say, 'I do these things, and as a result, my students are

thinking critically,'" explains Cindy Todd, art education program chair at Ferris State University in Michigan. She presents the materials at conferences, and teachers walk out knowing how art builds critical thinking skills.

Teacher Reflection. The CCAC program provides a framework to talk with teachers at all grade levels about how and why to infuse art across the curriculum. Kimberly Buskirk, the fine arts specialist at Gardens Elementary in Pasadena, Texas, used the free materials as part of the school district's after-school staff development program. "It gives them a new perspective on how to make creativity part of what they're already doing," she says. Buskirk has found that teacher reflection is what sells them on the arts. She urges them to think about their goals and observe how art brings those goals to fruition.

Collaborative Culture. Interactive discussions and hands-on exercises can help connect teachers to arts education. Katherine Dale Pohl, art teacher at Waveland Elementary School in Waveland, Mississippi, says the resources sparked her to think of new ways to connect with classroom teachers. "It helped me spread creativity to other parts of the school," she explains. "Now I'm brimming with ideas that will give teachers a taste of how beneficial visual thinking, problem solving, and risk taking can be for their classrooms."

When teachers become the arts-integration experts in their own schools, their energy and understanding grows exponentially. 

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