

# Artist in the Classroom Rationale Statement

To: Grand Forks Public School Board

From: ArtWise Board of Directors

Re: Proposal to Dissolve Artist in the Classroom Program

Date: April 6, 2021

## Key Points

The GFPS District should retain the Artist in the Classroom program for the following reasons:

- The program ensures all 3,396 GFPS elementary children have equitable access to standards-based visual arts education, following federal and state inclusion of visual arts as part of a well-rounded education.
  - The program currently operates with 1 FTE Director and 6 part-time artist educators (3.175 FTE)
- The Artist in the Classroom program provides a tremendous return on investment.
  - In 2019-2020, the Artist in the Classroom cost \$190,479
    - The GFPS District paid \$166,979
    - ArtWise donated \$23,500
  - The Artist in the Classroom program is 0.1% of the total GFPS budget, and amounts to \$49 per year per elementary student
- The Artist in the Classroom program engages all elementary children in creating and analyzing works of art using a variety of art media and in learning the content, processes, techniques, and art historical context of art making.
  - Artist educators visit 148 classrooms. All grade 1-5 classrooms receive 1 hour of instruction each week for up to 18 weeks. All Kindergarten classrooms receive 45 minutes of instruction for ten weeks.
  - This approach follows the Art as Curriculum model of instruction. Instruction is provided at a dedicated time.
  - This model ensures GFPS is on par with other school districts in the region (Fargo, West Fargo)
  - Teachers have expressed overwhelming support for the program in survey feedback
- The District proposes to replace the Artist in the Classroom program with instruction following the Arts-Integration Curriculum model, in which visual art is an approach to teaching another subject.
  - Instruction follows standards for the other subject matter, not visual arts standards. Visual arts education has no dedicated class time.
- External funding possibilities include federal sources and external grants
  - Federal sources include Title I, Title II, and Title IV funds
  - External grants must be pursued by the District, as ArtWise will not take on the program
- The Artist in the Classroom program can be restructured.
  - Option 1: Eliminate 1 FTE (director position), retain part-time artist-educator positions (3.175 FTE)
    - Ensures continuation of Arts as Curriculum instruction, providing instruction at dedicated time
    - Scheduling completed by principals, instructional oversight by Director of Curriculum and Instruction
  - Option 2: Retain 1 FTE and eliminate part time artist-educator positions
    - Will likely follow Arts Integration Curriculum, staff provides mentoring and modelling for teachers who will be responsible for incorporating visual arts into curriculum
    - Visual art instruction not provided at a dedicated time
  - Option 3: Eliminate 1 FTE and part-time artist-educator positions (3.175 FTE), provide professional development to teachers

## Introduction

ArtWise urges the Grand Forks Public School Board to keep visual arts instruction in GFPS elementary education through the Artist in the Classroom program for the following reasons, which this document will further explain. First, a child's education is not complete unless it includes the arts. A comprehensive strategy for a complete education includes rigorous, sequential, standards-based instruction in the classroom. The Artist in the Classroom program is uniquely suited to provide engaging, standards-based visual arts instruction to all elementary students in Grand Forks Public Schools. Second, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) lists the arts, including visual arts, in a definition of "well-rounded" education, and the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction reiterates the value of visual arts instruction in the North Dakota State ESSA Plan. This federal and state commitment to visual arts education must be affirmed at the local level so that the arts are part of well-rounded curriculum and are integral to every child's development. Finally, the Artist in the Classroom program, active for 28 years, provides an incredible return on investment to the GFPS District. The Artist in the Classroom program can be restructured to ensure standard-based visual art education at less cost.

## Artist in the Classroom Program

The GFPS District has proposed dissolving the Artist in the Classroom program at the end of the 2019-2020 academic year due to budgetary considerations. The Artist in the Classroom provides visual arts lessons to every K-5 elementary classroom. Lessons are taught by professional artist educators, are designed to correlate with North Dakota Visual Art Content Standards by grade level, and may be adjusted for individual classroom and student needs. The Artist in the Classroom program provides visual art instruction in grade 1-5 classroom for up to eighteen one-hour sessions over the academic year. The artist-educators visit each classroom Kindergarten classroom for ten 45-minute sessions during the academic year. Artist in the Classroom staff include five part-time artist-educators (3.175 FTE) and one full-time Director (1 FTE). The Director, a certified visual art teacher, is responsible for mentoring the artist-educators, creating teaching schedules, facilitating training, and providing classroom instruction. Artist-educators provide all art supplies used in instruction; supplies are stored at a central location in Ben Franklin Elementary School.

ArtWise is separate from the Artist in the Classroom Program. ArtWise is a nonprofit organization that has, since 1993, provided about \$25,000 annually for the Artist in the Classroom program and produces community programming in support of elementary art education. ArtWise also produces the annual Elementary Art Show, which showcases at least one artwork made by each K-5 child in GFPS during their Artist in the Classroom sessions.

In 2019-2020, the Artist in the Classroom program budget totaled \$190,479 for staff and supplies. After the ArtWise donation, the total cost of this program is \$166,979, which is 0.1% of the total anticipated 2019-2020 GFPS budget expenditures of \$113.8 million. (Knudson, 2020) ArtWise does not have the ability to support the full cost of the Artist in the Classroom program.

## Standards-based Arts Instruction

The Artist in the Classroom program provides elementary visual art education through an Art as Curriculum instructional model. In this model, a teacher specializing in visual arts teaches lessons focused on student acquisition of skills and knowledge in a particular art form, following national, state, or local instructional standards. In the Artist in the Classroom program, students engage in creating and analyzing works of art created in a variety of media by learning the content, processes, techniques, and art historical context of art-making.

This approach differs from an Arts-Integrated Curriculum instructional model, in which the arts serve as an approach to teaching another subject and as a vehicle for student learning. In this model, students engage in the creative process to explore connections between an art form and another subject area to gain greater

understanding in both. For example, students may learn about social studies through dramatization. (Zhou & Brown, 2018) The arts-integrated approach does not focus on visual arts standards-based instruction, or on the processes, techniques, content, or context of art-making.

Maintaining the Artist in the Classroom program ensures visual art instruction through the Art as Curriculum model. The Artist in the Classroom program teaches students essential visual literacy skills, such as the ability to interpret and recognize information presented through objects, symbols, and images, following state instructional standards. (Finley, 2014) The Artist in the Classroom program also teaches students how to create artwork in a variety of media and experiment with creative expression. Moreover, this model keeps GFPS elementary visual art instruction on par with school districts across the state of North Dakota. For example, West Fargo Public Schools offer two 30-minute visual art classes every six days, with instruction that follows National Core Arts Standards. (West Fargo Public Schools, 2021)

In 2007, the GFPS District developed a binder containing seven lesson plans for elementary teachers to use for half the school year, when Artist in the Classroom program is not in session. However, these lesson plans have been removed from the District staff resources website, hard-copy supplemental materials have been removed from the District library, and there has been very little drawdown on the supply budget for these lessons. Teacher responses on surveys indicate that the lessons in the binders will not compensate for the expertise artist-educators bring to the classroom. For example, one respondent indicated, “Being given a binder of art curriculum is no comparison to having a professional artist come into the classroom and talk about the components of art. Also having a dedicated block of time for art makes all the difference.”

Classroom teachers have used instruction provided through the Artist in the Classroom program to reinforce student learning in other subjects. For example, in teacher surveys, one respondent indicated “I use the lessons [the artist-educator] has taught my students in many curriculum areas throughout the year. For example, I especially will refer to an art lesson when teaching some concepts in math and talk about art elements when students are creating illustrations for their writing pieces.” Teachers have also reiterated the value of having artist-educators model art instruction in teaching art when the Artist in the Classroom program is not in session. For example, one respondent stated, “ArtWise lessons provide students with more than an understanding of art. The lessons learned intertwine with many areas of the first grade curriculum. In addition, I feel more confident teaching art lessons for the remainder of the school year (after seeing good modeling from Sheila).”

Teacher survey responses generally reiterate the value of the Artist in the Classroom program. For example, one teacher wrote: “I will be honest, I am not an artist. I can give students projects to do but I don't think they will be of the same caliber as the projects from a real artist. I do think the skills my students learned will be applied to their future art projects.” Another teacher wrote: “I find it difficult to plan art in the classroom that has such a variety as artist in the classroom. I also don't have the art history background knowledge Jeanne has, which I think really adds to the lesson.”

### Federal and State Commitment to Visual Arts Education

Federal law through the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Act identifies the arts as core academic subject. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the current iteration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, places particular focus on well-rounded educational opportunities that ensure all children have equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities in a variety of programs that provide rigorous coursework in curricular areas, including the visual arts.<sup>1</sup> The ESSA supports a comprehensive arts education to foster the creativity and

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<sup>1</sup> The ESSA defines well-rounded education as

“courses, activities, and programming in subjects such as English, reading or language arts, writing, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, foreign languages, civics, government, economics, **arts**,

innovations needed for a more competitive workforce. The arts are especially important in equipping students with a creative, competitive edge in the 21st century global economy. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills asserts, “The arts are among society’s most compelling and effective paths for developing 21st century skills in students.” (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2010) The arts provide students with skills and knowledge needed to develop the creativity and determination necessary for success. Moreover, the arts teach children skills necessary to succeed in life, such as problem solving, decision-making, and creative thinking. The arts also help children build self-esteem and self-discipline, articulate a vision, develop the ability to imagine what might be, and accept responsibility to complete a task from start to finish.

As part of ESSA accountability systems, states must include at least one indicator of school quality or student success beyond student achievement, graduation rates, and English proficiency. The 2017 North Dakota State ESSA Plan included school climate and student engagement as key indicators. (Baesler, 2017) Visual arts education supports each of these indicators. (Americans for the Arts, 2021) Visual arts instruction supports student success by strengthening elementary students’ reading readiness, fluency, and comprehension. An arts-rich school climate fosters dynamic learning environments, reinforces social connections, and promotes a positive school culture. Student engagement in the visual arts lead to demonstration of students’ improved attitudes toward school and increased attendance. Students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and students with special needs especially realize the benefits of arts education. Students in arts programming develop self-efficacy, self-confidence, and belief in their own abilities to accomplish goals. In general, the arts have been essential tools to achieving goals of education reform, including increasing student performance and improving school climate.

The North Dakota State ESSA Plan states that the visual arts “promote creativity and a different kind of problem-solving skills” and “promote fine and gross motor skills, risk taking, and further problem solving”. Furthermore, the North Dakota State ESSA Plan states:

“There is considerable evidence that teachers of the arts are often considered as having made the most meaningful impact on the lives of students by encouraging discipline, persistence, collaboration, risk taking, effort towards excellence and more. These are skills that last a lifetime and may be applied to any career choice. The arts also eliminate barriers and engage students in activities in which they create their own relevance.” (Baesler, 2017)

In 2019, the State of North Dakota developed visual arts standards for kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. These standards outline what students are expected to know and apply when creating, presenting, responding, and connecting to the arts. (Baesler, 2019) The Artist in the Classroom program utilizes these standards when creating visual arts lessons.

The GFPS District follows the North Dakota Century Code to determine required instructional areas. (State of North Dakota, 2021) Visual arts education is not a required area of instruction in the North Dakota Century Code. However, following guidelines outlined in the ESSA and the North Dakota State ESSA Plan, visual arts education is a component of a well-rounded education and should be included in the GFPS District elementary curriculum.

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history, geography, computer science, music, career and technical education, health, physical education, and any other subject, as determined by the state or local educational agency, with the purpose of providing all students access to an enriched curriculum and educational experience.”(U.S. Department of Education, 2021)

## Funding the Artist in the Classroom Program

The total cost of the Artist in the Classroom program was \$190,479 In the 2019-2020 academic year. ArtWise donated \$23,500 to the Artist in the Classroom Program, bringing to total cost to the GFPS District \$166,979. This amount is 0.1% of the total anticipated 2019-2020 GFPS budget expenditures of \$113.8 million. (Knudson, 2020) The program cost is equivalent to \$49 per student, each year. Funding for the Artist in the Classroom program is drawn from the general fund.

## Return on Investment

The District receives a tremendous return on investment in the Artist in the Classroom program. The Artist in the Classroom program engages every K-5 elementary student in the GFPS District in visual art instruction. This includes 3,396 students, and at least 182 teachers across 148 elementary classrooms. This engagement encourages student learning through the acquisition of problem solving, creative thinking, and critical thinking skills.

The Artist in the Classroom program improves school climate by providing exciting, engaging visual arts lessons to each elementary classroom. Artist-educators boost student creativity and self-confidence as they facilitate the memorable, “magical” learning experience of using artistic materials to create images and objects. Additionally, 95% of teacher survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Artist in the Classroom program was a positive experience for their students, and 95% of respondents indicated they agree or strongly agree that their Artist in the Classroom teacher was well-prepared.

Teachers have voiced overwhelming support for the Artist in the Classroom program. For example, teacher survey respondents wrote: “I really appreciate this program and love seeing the students be creative. I wish we could have art all year long!”; “I am so thankful to have an artist in the classroom for as long as I do! They do a wonderful job of teaching the content and engaging the kids in fun, educational projects. My only suggestion would be to let her stay all year :)”; and “ARTwise is an important part of my students’ first grade learning experience! The students absolutely loved the art projects and looked forward to ARTwise lessons each week. This was a very positive experience for my students. The students were engaged.”

The Artist in the Classroom ensures efficient use of art supplies in classrooms. Artist-educators transport various art media supplies between classes and schools on art carts, and share supplies between schools. Supplies are centrally stored at Ben Franklin Elementary School. Transporting and sharing supplies saves the GFPS District funds, as supplies do not need to be purchased for each classroom.

The Artist in the Classroom program provides rigorous, sequential, standards-based visual art curriculum following the Arts as Curriculum model of instruction. In the absence of the Artist in the Classroom program, the GFPS District may have to purchase curriculum for visual arts instruction to maintain this instructional model. The Artist in the Classroom program provides expert instruction in visual art media, concepts, context, and analysis. Artist-educators provide immediate feedback and encouragement to students to assist in student learning and skill development.

## Alternative Funding Sources for Visual Arts Education

Visual arts is included in the ESSA definition of a well-rounded education and is a subject area eligible for federal resources administered by the state and local agencies. Potential funding sources include:

- Title I funds
  - Supports personnel, instruction, and interventions in all subjects included in the ESSA definition for a well-rounded education, including visual arts, to help close achievement gaps and disparities to arts education in public schools. Local districts have flexibility in defining how to use the funds to support a well-rounded education. Title I funding can also be used to support

Targeted Assistance Schools programs in schools that do not meet the poverty threshold for school wide-use.

- Title II funds
  - Supports the preparation, training, and recruitment of high quality school educators.
- Title IV (Part A) funds
  - Support the arts as part of a well-rounded education. The North Dakota ESSA Plan allocates grants for the arts under the New Title IV Block Grant.
  - Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants specify the arts and music education as eligible uses of funds. Local districts apply for these funds.
- Private Grants
  - Grant allocations are competitive, and reliance on grant funding may put the Artist in the Classroom program at risk in future years
  - The GFPS District, under the leadership of the District's grant writer, should pursue grant funding.

### Restructuring the Artist in the Classroom Program

The current staff of the Artist in the Classroom program includes Mary Kulas, Coordinator, who is responsible for mentoring the artist-educators, creating teaching schedules, facilitating training, and providing classroom instruction; and five artist-educators that provide classroom instruction. Artist-educators include Terri Berg, Mary Kulas, Katie Fayette, Kasandra Gregoire, Karla Nelson, Jeanne O'Neil, and formerly, Sheila Dalglish.

The GFPS District may consider restructuring the program, which would result in lower costs while maintaining the Art as Curriculum instructional model. Options include:

#### Option1

Eliminate Director Position and maintain five artist-educator positions: Scheduling duties may be assumed by school principals, and development of curricula following North Dakota Visual Art Content Standards by artist-educators could be overseen by Director of Curriculum and Instruction. This approach maintains visual arts education through the Art as Curriculum model and ensures efficient use of art supplies. This approach would continue the practice of offering Artist in the Classroom sessions for about 16 weeks during the academic year.

#### Option 2

Maintain full-time Director position and eliminate artist-educator positions: The Director (a certified art instructor) would develop art curriculum, mentor classroom teachers, and model visual arts instruction throughout the academic year. Teachers would be primarily responsible for providing visual art instruction. This approach will likely not maintain visual arts education through the Art as Curriculum model, as the Director will not be able to teach visual arts standards-based curriculum to all elementary classrooms. It is more likely that the Director would collaborate with classroom teachers to integrate art into other grade-level curriculum by designing art projects within those standards and content areas. This learning experience follow the Arts-Integration Curriculum model. Additional supplies may need to be purchased, to ensure each classroom has adequate supplies for instruction. This approach also removes the artist-educator from the classroom environment, and requires that teachers provide visual art instruction throughout the academic year.

#### Option 3

Eliminate full-time Director and part-time artist-educator positions: Classroom teachers will need to receive professional development support to provide visual arts instruction. This approach eliminates the Arts as Curriculum model, and removes artist-educator from the classroom environment and places the responsibility of developing visual art lesson plans and providing visual arts instruction entirely on classroom teachers.

## Note on Remote Instruction

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Artist in the Classroom program provided online, pre-recorded video lessons to be implemented by classroom teachers during the art instruction period. These lessons were designed as placeholders until the artist-educators could safely re-enter classrooms. Long-term use of these lessons have significant drawbacks:

- Limitations on the use of art media
  - The online lessons were designed for student to utilize only basic school supplies. A key component of the Artist in the Classroom Program is guided exploration of various art media, to exercise fine motor skills and increase confidence and problem solving skills.
- Lack of artist-educator feedback and one-on-one art instruction
  - The online lessons provided classroom instruction, but did not provide mentorship materials for teachers. Artist-educators do not have access to SeeSaw and rarely saw student work. As such, artist-educators had almost no opportunity to provide feedback or comment to the students on their artistic progress. Artist feedback, student engagement, and one-on-one instruction are core elements of student learning in the visual arts.
- The Artist in the Classroom teachers were not present in schools to provide the “magical” experience of transitioning to visual arts activities.
  - The presence of an artist-educator in the classroom transforms the learning experience for students. The physical absence of the artist-educator may affect student enthusiasm for art instruction, which in turn may affect school climate and student engagement.

## Summary

ArtWise urges the GFPS District to maintain the Artist in the Classroom Program. This program provides essential standards-based visual arts instruction to all elementary students in the GFPS District. The Artist in the Classroom program offers the GFPS District an incredible return on investment by engaging children with lessons that teach visual literacy skills essential to the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy. By maintaining the Artist in the Classroom program, the GFPS District ensures that visual arts instruction follows the Art as Curriculum model, and that visual arts education remains on par with regional elementary visual arts programs. Teachers have expressed overwhelming support for the Artist in the Classroom program. Support for the Artist in the Classroom program asserts the recognition of visual arts as a part of a well-rounded education, as defined by the federal ESSA and reiterated in the North Dakota ESSA Plan.

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