



Clayton County Public Schools, Georgia Case Study

GEORGIA DISTRICT ESTABLISHES ART AS A NEW LANGUAGE FOR LEARNING WITH created

Clayton County Public Schools begins its journey in a district arts-integration initiative with created professional learning.



An Optimistic Future

With passionate education leaders driving a new initiative at Clayton County Public Schools (CCPS), the district is seeing success with its expansive arts-integration program. Dr. Monika Wiley is the director of fine arts for CCPS, which is making strides to improve overall student achievement and teacher performance. With the appointment of a new superintendent as well as other staff members that support the arts, the district culture is shifting toward seamless staff buy-in for arts-integration.

Seventy-two different languages are spoken throughout CCPS, inspiring Wiley to fully embrace arts-integration to function as a universal language across curricula. Arts-integration is her passion project as she balances her role in managing the district's fine arts department as well as integrating the arts into core content.

Every CCPS school has some form of fine arts or performing arts programming. The elementary schools have art and music classes, while the middle schools have art, orchestra, band, and chorus. The high schools feature art, band, chorus, and guitar programs. In addition to the arts programming, there are also Magnet programs with specific arts focuses, and selective 'schools of the arts' for elementary, middle, and high school students.

"Research shows that arts-integration increases student achievement; students are more engaged when the arts are integrated," Wiley said. "You integrate what students love while making the content more interesting. That has always been my motivation to use an arts-integration approach."

The end goal is to have arts integrated into core curriculum—this is where creatED provides support for forward-thinking schools within the district.

Clayton County Public Schools

Profile

- Fifth largest school district in Georgia
- 65 campuses
- 54,400 students (2015–16)
- 7,000 employees
- 3,300+ teachers

“ Research shows that arts-integration increases student achievement; students are more engaged when the arts are integrated. ”

—Dr. Monika Wiley, Director of Fine Arts for Clayton County Public Schools



Focusing on the Arts

It didn't take long for Wiley to earn buy-in from faculty. Prior to planning for the first steps in the initiative, she spoke with the principals. Once she had the principals' support, she then pursued garnering interest from the staff within those supporting schools.

"Arts-integration stimulates innovative thinking and supports creativity," said Dr. Donna Jackson, principal at Jackson School of the Arts. "The students' creative side is emphasized through integrating Crayola's visual arts lessons in the core curriculum. Lessons become creative expressions of what students can do when allowed an opportunity to display their learning through an art form."

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–Dr. Donna Jackson, Principal at Jackson School of the Arts

To prepare for arts-integration, the entire school must be in the mindset for change. The implementation of creatED spurred the creation of a Creative Leadership Team specifically focused on arts-integration. Each school involved in the initiative has its own Creative Leadership Team that was trained on the methods for building a school network of teacher leaders to transform their teaching practices. In the second year of the arts-integration initiative, Wiley hopes to train the next set of teachers to build on the schools' creative capacity.

"My background is in mathematics. When I started teaching, I worked at a school of the arts, integrating the arts into my mathematics classroom. In my first year, I didn't take the concept to heart, but after I really started integrating the arts into my academic classroom, I saw a difference in student engagement and achievement. So, I always take that experience wherever I go," Wiley said. "Trying to integrate art into the math curriculum after majoring in mathematics in college, it took my mind time to shift from analytical to creatively analytical."

James H. Brown Elementary School quickly took to the arts-integration strategy, which is evident from the school climate. This school displays art everywhere, not just works of art, but core content-related artwork. The principal has already developed a plan to integrate art throughout the entire building within the next year, while the school's Creative Leadership Team supports the strategy for change.

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–Trina Reaves, Principal at James H. Brown Elementary School

"The act of creating ignites in students an eagerness to learn, engage, and process information in a way that is unique to each student, yet extremely important to all 21st century learners," said Trina Reaves, principal at James H. Brown Elementary School. "Our students will more frequently be asked to solve a problem or create a new process in tomorrow's workplace. Integrating the arts fuels the creativity needed for our students to make connections and realize real-world applications of literacy, science, technology, engineering, math, and the social sciences. Arts-integration helps them understand that what they learn today will help save our tomorrow."

Resources for Success

Since its inception three years ago, Martha Ellen Stilwell School of the Arts has had a 100 percent graduation rate year after year. Wiley has been visiting the arts-integrated schools to monitor the progress and mindset of the educators.

"Art provides an avenue for people that learn differently. It also provides ways to convey information and demonstrating what they've learned," Wiley said. "Art



builds a bridge for students that speak different languages, and that's why arts-integration is a great fit for CCPS."

CCPS's former superintendent, Ms. Luvenia W. Jackson, was a major supporter of the arts in Clayton County. She and the Board of Education have continued to endorse the arts in various capacities by supporting local and state funding for the arts. That is why CCPS has a heavy focus on grant funding to sustain their arts-integration program.

CCPS strategically applied for a federal grant and included createdED as one of their partners because data was available to outline the benefits of arts-integration. If the grant is awarded, their funding effort is done. Wiley noted, "We have a good relationship with createdED. They know that if there is extra funding out there, then we are going to use it in the best interest of our students, and we feel that arts integration is in their best interest."

Buy-in starts with school leaders. Data to support an arts-integrated initiative is often the key to demonstrating the fidelity of such a program. Educators that really embrace arts integration are typically the teachers that are risk-takers, who are always looking to innovate classroom practices and find new ways to engage students. Model schools are essential to present to district decision-makers, to show them how arts-integration is working for a school similar to theirs.

"Educators are hesitant at first. We don't believe something works until we see that it's working in an area that's similar to ours," Wiley said.



Creative leaders at CCPS have taken it upon themselves to jump in to assist Wiley in her endeavors. There is confidence throughout the district that integrating the arts into core curriculum will be a sustainable plan, with long-term impact on their students.

"I recruit teachers that I know can execute the project and want to be a leader," Wiley said. "It's all about how we will sustain the department and how we will continue to grow. Through creative leadership, I am confident that arts-integration will continue to take hold in our district, improving teaching and learning outcomes."

For more information about createdED from Crayola go to crayola.com/createdED or email us at professionalservices@crayola.com.

