



Prince George's County Public Schools, Maryland Case Study

D.C.-AREA DISTRICT SPURS ARTS REVOLUTION WITH creaTED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Prince George's County Public Schools focuses on arts-integration to enhance student achievement, cater to diverse learning styles and encourage creative leadership.



A District on a Creative Mission

Approaching the fourth year of its arts-integration initiative, Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) in the Washington Metropolitan Area is modeling the success of an arts-infused education strategy. Out of the 208 schools in the district, 65 are currently enrolled in the arts-integration initiative, with new enrollments doubling each year. Through voluntary participation, these strategies have been spearheaded by Creative Leadership Teams at each school, serving as pioneers for change in an effort to improve student engagement and achievement across the district.

PGCPS CEO, Dr. Kevin Maxwell, was the visionary behind arts-integration for the district. The initiative began as Maxwell, principals and other district leaders were brainstorming effective ways to teach their diverse student population. As an advocate for the arts, Maxwell sought to enhance arts education programs by hiring an administrator for that sole purpose. With a special focus on literacy and math, the administrative team needed a unique way to present educational material that would fully engage all students. After thoughtful deliberation, they decided to take an arts-integration approach.

“For this initiative, it was critical that the schools participating in arts-integration were self-selected. They volunteered to be a part of this approach based on the resources and information we provide for teaching and learning,” said John Ceschini, arts integration officer at Prince George's County Public Schools. “Schools have adopted the arts-integration approach as a means to look outside of the box to engage diverse students and cater to every learning style.”

Ceschini adds that arts-integration is not a program, it's a strategy. That's where Crayola's creatED professional learning comes in.

Prince George's County Public Schools

Profile

- The nation's 25th largest school district
- 208 schools
- 130,000 students
- 19,000 employees
- Free and Reduced Meals: 63.8%

Arts Integration in Prince George's County Public Schools

- A pilot program of 15 ethnically and geographically diverse schools representing all grade levels
- Today, 65 of the 208 schools participate

“ Schools have adopted the arts-integration approach as a means to look outside of the box to engage diverse students and cater to every learning style. ”

—John Ceschini, Arts Integration Officer,
Prince George's County Public Schools



Trying Something New

A main objective at PGCPSS is to reach a critical mass of teachers who have adopted arts-integration teaching strategies. Working hand-in-hand with PGCPSS, Crayola implements the concept of Creative Leadership Teams in order to identify teachers who are committed to using creativity and coaching to transform the entire school.

The Creative Leadership Teams earn whole staff buy-in by modeling effective arts-infused teaching strategies. Other teachers who see demonstrations of arts-integration improving student learning become more eager to take on the challenge. Crayola staff provides initial training on arts-integration and coaching guidance to prepare the Creative Leadership Team for implementation.

"We let every team tailor strategies to its school and its needs. The approach is effective because there's no cookie cutter way to do it," said Ceschini. "Students take ownership of their learning when there's arts across curriculums."

“Students take ownership of their learning when there's arts across curriculums.”

—John Ceschini

creatED emphasizes the collaborative planning piece as key in every school. When Creative Leadership Teams meet with educators throughout their school, they identify the learning challenges that need to be addressed and evaluate how arts-integration can help. For PGCPSS, the top priority is solving the issue of student engagement to influence deeper learning experiences. Too often, students withdraw from learning if they have to sit passively rather than engage in hands-on experiences that build comprehension and make their thinking visible. The research-based concept of creative expression has proven to prevent students from withdrawing by offering them the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in alternative ways.

The creatED professional learning model lets teachers experience learning the same way as their students. Teachers are encouraged to implement new practices, visualize new ideas, and stretch beyond their comfort zone, seeing how it helps to learn in different ways. The goal is to model this informed risk-taking that sparks problem-solving, which is the creative approach to learning and teaching.

An Argument for the Arts

Creativity is not limited to the arts. The same creative problem-solving and collaboration skills are used in subjects like STEAM and across other disciplines. Ceschini noted that when bringing new teachers into the arts-integration process, some are already known risk-takers when it comes to implementing new teaching practices. Others are looking for new teaching techniques, and some are just curious as to how they can connect with their students in different ways.

"I've found that when teachers leave their comfort zone, they are thankful that they took the challenge. After integrating arts into their practice, they feel comfortable using different strategies to reach their students," said Ceschini. "Success is achieved when risks are taken. If you keep doing the same old thing, you'll keep getting the same results. Although change is difficult, that's how you achieve success."

“After integrating arts into their practice, they feel comfortable using different strategies to reach their students.”

—John Ceschini

With so many obligations, curriculum guides, and high-stakes testing in place, educators are often concerned that an arts-integration initiative will take up more of their already limited time. Arts-integration is not meant to take the place of curriculum or add to the list of teacher obligations. Instead, it is designed to support initiatives



that are already in place. It gives students and teachers a voice—a visual voice which helps those who flourish within that learning style. Paired with education technology and other relevant content, the arts should be used as a vehicle to deliver learning goals that are already part of the curriculum.

Building a Future of Creative Thinkers

The 21st Century skills that accompany an arts-integration model are what PGCPs wants their students to have when they leave school and enter the workforce. With arts-integration in place, students graduate with the skills to become creative problem solvers, informed risk-takers and creative leaders.

Students can go beyond paper and pencil when articulating what they have learned. Artistic expression tactics that have been used to demonstrate student learnings at PGCPs include writing a song, performing a dance and creating a work of art. These practices expand the ways students are able to approach a new concept or idea.

To evaluate impact and measure success of arts-integration, PGCPs performs “learning walks” to review how the arts are being implemented. By looking at artifacts such as student work, student achievement scores and strategies of the Creative Leadership Team, educational leaders can evaluate fidelity of the strategic vision for the school.



“There’s definitely a correlation between arts-integration and increased test scores. I’m not going to say one directly causes the other, but there is a strong correlation. Perhaps it’s the overall environment that freedom of expression creates. It’s a fun, engaging, risk-taking environment that also builds learning confidence,” said Ceschini.

Ceschini notes that creaTED’s arts-infused education approach has resulted in increased student engagement, higher staff buy-in compared to other programs, and more leadership participation by faculty.

“We don’t know what jobs will be available when our students graduate, but we need to be proactive about the skills they might need,” said Ceschini. “Achievement through creative expression empowers students to keep taking those risks, which leads to self-confidence and grit to move forward.”

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

