Champion Creatively Alive Children
Together, we give colorful wings to the invisible things that grow in the hearts and minds of children.

Creativity shapes the world.
Giving us wings.
If there is no creativity, The world is a barren field without color.

"Creativity gives us wings"
Emma Z. Grade 5
Chenery School, Massachusetts

Crayola believes in unleashing, nurturing, and honoring the colorful originality in every child. That's why we celebrate and support educators who inspire and value creative expression in their students. Like you, we know that arts-infused education helps kids acquire critical 21st century skills. So Crayola champions creatively alive children with you by offering free videos, grants and free professional development resources. To learn more, visit Crayola.com/CreativelyAlive

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Dear Friends:

Welcome to this very special supplement to Principal magazine. Crayola and NAESP are proud to help you “Champion Creatively Alive Children” and support arts-infused education. We believe, as you do, that creative experiences in the classroom create memorable, engaged learning.

Arts-infused education teaches children the four C’s—communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity—the skills they need to understand and contribute to a complicated and interconnected world and thrive as individuals and as citizens in the 21st century. We encourage you to immerse yourself in the following pages to learn more about the best practices your colleagues throughout the country are using and to further explore innovative ways of infusing art into your school.

You and your fellow elementary and middle-level principals are a vitally important catalyst for creating a lasting foundation for learning. You see firsthand every day the creative spark that naturally exists in the hearts and minds of every child. We are delighted to join you in keeping that spark alive!

Mike Perry, CEO, Crayola LLC

Gail Connelly, Executive Director, NAESP
Higher achievement, engagement, creativity, and self-confidence are all linked to student involvement in the arts.

by Vanessa St. Gerard

At the end of each school day, there are students all over the country who inevitably will place in their backpacks a drawing, painting, or other art project to take home and proudly show to their families. Whether their work illustrates the story a teacher read to them during class or depicts their interpretation of a moment in history, the time students spend completing these projects shouldn’t be viewed as “down time” between lesson plans or the opportunity to simply get their “creative juices” flowing. Instead, as evidenced by countless studies, time spent engaging in the arts has lasting effects on children of all ages, not only instilling in them a sense of creativity and innovation, but also providing them the skills needed to compete in a global economy.

In May 2011, the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities released Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America’s Future Through Creative Schools, a landmark report resulting from an in-depth review of the current condition of arts education and examination of the recent research conducted about its documented benefits. The President’s Committee found that the outcomes derived from high-quality arts education fall into four categories:

- Student achievement;
- Motivation and engagement;
- Creative thinking; and
- Social competencies.

Images courtesy of Oxford Elementary, Jonathan D. Hyatt P.S. 154, and Evergreen Mill Elementary; Rui Camilo/plainpicture/Corbis (refrigerator)
**Student Achievement**

The No Child Left Behind Act identifies art as a core academic subject alongside math and reading. Unfortunately, arts education is too often one of the first subjects to be reduced or eliminated when budgets are cut or when a school’s curriculum changes to focus on standardized assessments. However, as Sandra Ruppert reveals in *Critical Evidence: How the Arts Benefit Student Achievement*, "research has shown that what students learn in the arts may help them to master other subjects such as reading or social studies."

Teachers who see the value in the arts look for ways to incorporate them into their lesson plans—a strategy that has proved beneficial to students. According to *Critical Evidence*, a report published by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, "study of the arts in its many forms—whether as a stand-alone subject or integrated into the school curriculum—is increasingly accepted as an essential part of achieving success in school, work, and life."

James S. Catterall, a professor at the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, has published leading studies on the impact of the arts on children. In his 2009 study that examined 12 years of longitudinal data, Catterall found that arts-engaged, low-income students are more likely than their non-arts-engaged peers to have attended and done well in college, obtained meaningful employment, volunteered in their communities, and voted. In addition, a 2002 study by Catterall found that middle and high school students with high arts involvement performed better on standardized achievement tests than students with low arts involvement.

Research of the younger grades also finds value in arts integration. *Critical Evidence* reports that the study of music has provided a context for teaching language skills; and the relationship between drama and the development of literacy skills among young children is well documented. In addition, *Reinvesting in Arts Education* brings attention to an arts-integration model in Chicago that "showed consistently higher average scores on the district's reading and mathematics assessments over a six-year period when compared to all district elementary schools."

**Creative Thinking**

Ensuring that students have solid knowledge in reading, writing, math, and science is one way to prepare them to be college- and career-ready, but more abstract abilities referred to as 21st century skills have emerged as additional vital components of a student's preparation for life after his or her K-12 schooling. Critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration—known as the four C's—have been identified as some of the 21st century skills students should be learning, and the arts have proved to be a method to teach these skills to students.

"Principals know that a curious, creative spirit is key to complex problem-solving, and that preparing 21st century learners requires more than fortifying them with core academic skills," says Gail Connelly, executive director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP).

NAESP's standards guide, *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do*, explains that "learners should be allowed to be tactile, experiential, interactive and social, and to move purposefully around the classroom as part of the learning process." Learning in the arts—music, visual arts, theater, and dance—contributes to students' abilities to interpret and explain concepts in different ways. For example, one way to measure reading comprehension might be to task students with writing a book report. But a project asking them to demonstrate their interpretation of a chapter through illustration, song, or theater allows them to examine the story differently while challenging them to use their creativity.

The highest student impact comes from equal access "to certified art teachers who ensure curricular connections to help to challenge students to explore, discover, and make new meanings," says Deborah Reeve, executive director of the National Art Education Association. "That's really where meaningful learning takes place—when students can make rich and multiple..."
Defining the Four C’s
The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, a national organization that advocates for 21st century readiness for every student, defines the four C’s—creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication—as the skills students need to succeed now and in their future lives as global citizens.

**CREATIVITY is**
- Coming up with new ideas that work;
- Thinking out of the box; and
- The ability to see what’s not there and create something new.

**COLLABORATION is**
- Working toward a common goal;
- Valuing others’ contributions; and
- Developing a process for compromise and consensus building.

**CRITICAL THINKING is**
- Applying information to make complex decisions and solve problems in innovative ways;
- Understanding the interconnections between information remembered and discovered; and
- Forming meaning out of information.

**COMMUNICATION is**
- Conveying or expressing thoughts and feelings in ways that others understand;
- Customizing messages for audience to help others understand; and
- Hearing and interpreting the ideas of others.

connections rather than learning in an isolated area.”

An approach to education that embraces creativity and inspires students is critical to the country’s economic competitiveness, says Timothy Magner, executive director of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. “Unleashing the creative potential of every child is in our national interest and it’s our moral responsibility,” he explains. “The world we live in is changing at a rapid pace and our children must have the creativity skills that will allow them to engage with and contribute to change.”

**Motivation and Engagement**
When students are engaged in the arts, their engagement in class is particularly, and school in general, increases. **Reinvesting in Arts Education**, the report by the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, states that the motivation and engagement that results from arts involvement has been linked to high attendance, reduction in dropout rates, participation in student government, and an appreciation for the results of effort and persistence.

“By educating students in the arts, and incorporating arts into content area instruction, schools engage the whole child by tapping into his or her multiple intelligences,” says Connelly. “Schools do students a distinct disservice if opportunities for exercising their creative talents and interests are not provided.”

In **Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development**, a report published by the Arts Education Partnership, Catterall writes that children are more engaged when they are involved in artistic activities in school than when involved in curricular activities. “Perhaps children who find parts of their school day satisfying and fun through the arts become more sanguine about the whole school experience,” he concludes.

**Social Competencies**
Collaboration and teamwork, social tolerance, and self-confidence fall under two categories: They are values companies seek in their future employees and they are also benefits resulting from arts involvement. For example, in “Learning in the Visual Arts and the Worldviews of Young Children,” Catterall and Kylie Peppler found that “participation in a sustained program of high quality visual arts instruction associated significantly with growth in our indicators of general self-efficacy.” They also write that “self-efficacious children believe they can be agents in creating their own futures and are more optimistic about what the world has in store for them.”

Magner adds that building a strong economy and remaining competitive depends on developing “students [who] are ready to succeed in the jobs of today and are prepared for the jobs of the future, many of which haven’t been created yet.”

**Preparation for the Future**
The research makes clear the benefits an arts-infused curriculum can bring to students. The President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities explains that “the arts will have a more secure place in the curriculum when teachers experience firsthand the deepening of learning in their subjects that comes from incorporating arts teaching strategies.”

As you send students home with a new art project to show their parents, keep in mind that you are also simultaneously sending them into society with a renewed sense of creativity, confidence, and innovation that they will carry with them and benefit from throughout their lives.

Vanessa St. Gerard is managing editor of Principal magazine.
Turning ideas into practice
Five schools offer five promising practices.  

From fourth graders learning science by building their own Rube Goldberg machines, to immigrant students in Alaska creating bonds through a shared art project, the amazing stories of these five schools will push you to ask what you can do at your school to enhance learning through the arts. Each school is an ordinary public school that was awarded a 2010-2011 Champion Creatively Alive Children grant from Crayola. They didn’t have special abilities or extraordinary student populations that made the projects they embarked on possible. Instead, what they had were innovative ideas that became promising practices. What will you make possible in your school?
Creating 3-D Science and Art Projects

BURNET, TEXAS, is a tiny town of fewer than 5,000 residents about an hour northeast of Austin. For many students and their families, it’s a long trip to get to an art museum or science center. So principal Jill Wittekiend, art teacher Samantha Melvin, and their school’s team of fourth- and fifth-grade teachers resolved to bring hands-on art and science learning to Burnet.

Their goal, as Wittekiend and her team put it, was to “crank it up a notch” by creating innovative, sustainable projects for each of the two grades that would integrate art and science and allow the students to create fabulous final products.

For example, fifth graders at Richey Elementary were able to embark on an exciting art and science adventure. “When our fifth-grade standards changed to include the study of simple machines,” explained Wittekiend, “we took the opportunity to move toward a project-based, inquiry-driven model.”

They studied the ingenious early machines of Leonardo da Vinci and the convoluted cartoon machines of Rube Goldberg. Like da Vinci, students aspired to be keen observers of the natural and mechanical worlds and spent many class periods recording, writing, and drawing their observations.

But it’s their final project that is just the kind that any 10-year-old is bound to remember for years to come. Students created textured clay pots with lids that would serve as simple machines. Then the students assembled all their clay pots into a collaborative Rube Goldberg-inspired sculptural form for marbles to run through.

“As a way to document their progress, student groups photographed and videotaped their marble machines as they developed them,” explained Wittekiend. Best of all, “their installations will be exhibited in the town square for everyone to see.”

Massachusetts
School: John P. Oldham Elementary (grades 1-5), Norwood, Massachusetts
Goal: To improve students’ writing skills through storytelling and illustration

Improving Writing Through Visual Art

AT OLDHAM ELEMENTARY on the outskirts of Boston, the language-arts block used to mean every first-grade teacher: in every school in the district needed to be on the same page—literally, the same page of the textbook.

Not anymore. It had been a consistent practice of principal Wesley Manaday to collect and review writing examples from every student in the school once a month. Over time, Manaday observed that the reluctant writers were more likely to produce a stronger writing sample when they had been stimulated with the opportunity to create rich, textured images. More art meant more words and more complex sentences.

Oldham was able to create a story-making program in partnership with the University of New Hampshire’s Center for the Advancement of Art-Based Literacy. Literacy expert Beth Olshansky, the center’s director, helped Oldham use best practices to enhance both students’ writing skill and their creative process.

In her research, Olshansky has found that when students begin with the image-making process, they tend to move away from simple personal narratives and toward more robust and well-articulated fiction. Oldham students drew pictures first and then moved on to writing. In turn, their writing became much more varied and imaginative.

The school is looking forward to seeing how the new program affects students’ reading and writing assessments. While many schools are cutting back on the arts and enrichment to focus on testing, said Manaday, his school is proving that “the arts and enrichment are needed to increase student achievement.”

Texas
School: R.J. Richey Elementary (grades 4-5), Burnet, Texas
Goal: To bring art and creativity into the science curriculum
Digging Into History

Each day, buses bring kids from 30 different neighborhoods throughout the city to Pittsburgh Carmalt Science and Technology Academy. Principal Sandra Och noticed that although her 600-student school was a melting pot of sorts, students didn’t know much about one another’s neighborhoods. “I wanted kids to understand, yes, neighborhoods are different, but they have similarities too, and let’s embrace the similarities,” she said.

Thirty leaders from the various neighborhoods were invited to the school to talk about the history of their communities, the architecture, and the impact of immigrants. Kids then discussed what they heard and began a process that Och said helped students gain respect for their own neighborhoods and others.

Architecture students from Carnegie Mellon University worked with students to build three-dimensional replicas of buildings in their neighborhoods. They also designed site plans for their own communities. Then, students created commercials to promote their ideal neighborhood and shared them with students in other schools through distance learning. The partnership extended to the mayor’s office, expanding the children’s understanding of community and citizenship.

This project involved research, history, writing, music, technology, and art, and also gave the students a real sense of ownership, Och explained. “I’m always looking for a way to incorporate the arts into what kids are doing,” she said. “Children buy into education then. It’s something for them to look forward to and excite them—and they are learning.”

Pennsylvania

School: Pittsburgh Carmalt Science and Technology Academy (grades pre-K-8), Pittsburgh

Goal: To use the arts to plan an ideal community

Alaska

School: John D. Shaw Elementary (grades K-6), Wasilla, Alaska

Goal: To use the arts to build connections among the school’s Russian, Ukrainian, and English-speaking communities

Building Community in Alaska

SHAW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL was built five years ago to accommodate the growing population of families who have flocked to Wasilla, Alaska, making it one of the fastest-growing towns in the state.

Because there were so many newcomers from all over the United States, Russia, and Ukraine, many students and their families didn’t know one another. Principal Karl Schleich came up with a project to bring the community together.

After the students studied the migration of Alaskan salmon, the school gave each of the 400 students a wooden salmon to decorate at home to illustrate his or her family’s own migration story, reflecting the family’s culture and traditions. To accompany their visual representations, the students wrote papers about how their family came to live in Alaska.

The families were invited to view the artistic creations and share family recipes at a potluck dinner at the school. “One of our biggest goals was reaching out to the Russian and Ukrainian communities. We had newsletters and specific notes translated,” said Schleich. Nearly 480 members of the school community turned out for the event.

At the event, grade-level teachers acted as hosts for storytelling sessions, which took place all over the school. “People discovered lots of common connections. You’d hear them saying, ‘I never knew that about you,’” recalled Schleich. “Every family got to share their story. It was everything we wanted.”
Exploring Nature and Art

Oregon
School: Springville K-8 School, Portland, Oregon
Goal: To implement project-based “learning expeditions” that incorporate the arts and creative thinking

WHEN SECOND-GRADE teacher Jennifer Falkowski wanted to raise the level of work in her classroom, she decided that changing the way she and her students thought about process would make all the difference in the final product. “I decided to put myself out there and take a risk. That’s what I expect my kids to do,” said the teacher at Springville K-8 School.

Instead of focusing on separate subjects, Springville students head off on “learning expeditions”—big units of study that merge art, science, and social studies. For example, third-grade students studied the various bridges in the state, learning about their history, engineering, and importance in the community. They then illustrated the different kinds of bridges they had studied during the unit.

Other students studied wolves and their habitat, including using a grid and painting techniques to create a 12-by-8-foot mural of wolves in the wild.

“Our goal is to embed high-quality products and the character trait of perseverance in our school culture,” said principal Cheryl Ames. At many schools, students make a picture or write a poem and move on. By contrast, Springville students are expected to evaluate and refine their work until it is the best it can possibly be. “It is only when students learn how to evaluate their work and use the feedback from others that they enhance and improve their work,” said Ames.

Creating a final product that has value outside the classroom is another key element in Springville’s approach. This year, second graders wrote books about wolves that are available to others in the library; fourth graders created a guidebook for an artifact trunk from the Westward Movement; and sixth-grade students wrote a guidebook with accompanying watercolor drawings of flora and fauna on a local hiking trail.

“We believe that it’s important for kids to express their learning in a product that they edit and refine until they achieve the level of quality that is expected of a craftsman. And there should be an authentic purpose to their work,” said Ames. To reach this learning goal, art has to be a part of the process: skills of art and writing go together in creating good citizens and in preparing students for college and success later in life, she said.

Caralee Adams is a freelance education writer and a blogger for www.edweek.org.

Grant Recipients

Congratulations to all the schools that were awarded a 2010-2011 Champion Creatively Alive Children grant.

Principal Kelly Gustafson
Bower Hill Elementary
Venetia, Pennsylvania

Principal Karlona Sheppard
East Glacier Park Grade School
East Glacier Park, Montana

Principal Jacqueline Danilidis
Estelle Elementary
Marrero, Louisiana

Principal Laurie McDonald
Evergreen Mill Elementary
Leesburg, Virginia

Principal Michael Craver
Flocktown/Kossman Elementary
Long Valley, New Jersey

Principal Joe Corcoran
Harriet Gifford Elementary
Elgin, Illinois

Principal Karl Schleich
John D. Shaw Elementary
Wasilla, Alaska

Principal Wesley Manaday
John P. Oldham Elementary
Norwood, Massachusetts

Principal Marsha Elliott
Jonathan D. Hyatt P.S. 154
Bronx, NY

Principal Luis Soria
Mitchell Elementary
Chicago

Principal Mary Donaldson
Monticello Intermediate
Monticello, Arkansas

Principal Patrice Goldys
Norwood Elementary
Baltimore

Principal Marcia Wolf
Orem’s Elementary
Baltimore

Principal Jeff Clay
Oxford Elementary
Oxford, Mississippi

Principal Carolyn Wood
Pennington Elementary
Nashville, Tennessee

Principal Sandra Och
Pittsburgh Carmalt Science & Tech Academy
Pittsburgh

Principal Darlene Carter
P.S. 315, School of Performing Arts
Brooklyn, New York

Principal Jill Wittekiend
R.J. Richey Elementary
Burnet, Texas

Principal Cheryl Ames
Springville K-8 School
Portland, Oregon

Principal Thomas Santo
Zane North Elementary
Collingswood, New Jersey
Infuse Creativity in No Time

Whether in four minutes, four weeks, or four years, bring creativity to your school. by Hannah Hudson

Are you ready to bring more creative learning into your school? While the four C’s—critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication—will naturally fit into your school’s existing curriculum, changing your school culture to emphasize these skills takes time and planning. The good news is that school leaders can get started in just a few minutes. Here are practical steps you can take—from four-minute activities to a four-year plan—that will transform your school into one that embraces 21st century skills.
What You Can Do in ... 

Four Minutes

In a school, every minute matters. In as little as four minutes, students can complete an activity that sparks creative thinking, and you can take the first step in enhancing your school's curriculum. Start by trying to break larger goals into smaller ones that can be accomplished at the beginning or end of class. Here are a few ideas.

Drop everything and create. Many schools set aside a few minutes each day to "Drop Everything and Read," a national program whose goal is to make reading a regular part of every day. In a similar fashion, Evergreen Mill Elementary School in Leesburg, Virginia, takes time to "Stop, Drop, and Create." During these sessions, everyone—students, teachers, and support staff—tackles a creative challenge such as drawing and naming an imaginary bug or making an underwater creature out of modeling clay. Focusing the entire school on a creative challenge is total collaboration. It's also a great way to build critical- and conceptual-thinking skills.

Start sketch journals. Just a few minutes a day of sketching and writing in a journal offers students an opportunity to reflect, make connections, and develop ideas. It's integral to the daily routine at Montana's East Glacier Park Grade School, where students study the state's American Indian tribes all year long. Students respond to prompts that encourage them to link lessons to their own lives. When students study the environment in American Indian culture, for example, they also draw or write in their journals about a favorite outdoor place.

Make a phone call. You might be surprised just how much can be accomplished with one phone call. There are many arts organizations that will happily share their expertise. Look for ones in your area that can help enrich your school's existing curriculum. When educators at J.D. Hyatt P.S. 154 in the Bronx, New York, wanted to boost their character education program, they reached out to City Parks PuppetMobile. Soon all the students in the school had seen a professional puppet show and were on their way to making their own puppet shows about character education.

What You Can Do in ... 

Four Hours

Chances are, you already take the time for professional development days, field trips, and teacher planning. Take a closer look at how you can incorporate the four C's into those valuable hours. The following schools have the right idea.

Hold an inspiring workshop. Devote a professional development session to "Champion Creatively Alive Children" using the video series and trainers' guides available for free at www.crayola.com/creativelyalive and www.naesp.org/creativity. If you don't have four hours, divide the series into smaller bites; each video runs about four minutes and can stand alone. Also consider adding in hands-on exercises or group discussions for a 15-minute inspiration during a staff meeting or a parent-teacher evening.

Head outside and create. When creativity demands a change in scenery from the usual classroom environment, the answer might be as simple as heading outside. At Monticello Intermediate School in Arkansas, each class worked together to build its own original clay castle on school grounds. When students returned to the classroom, they took the learning further using the castles as a basis for scientific observation and literacy connections. The time spent outdoors engaged in the arts laid the foundation for weeks of learning.

Have teachers team up. While whole-school collaboration might be your eventual goal, try sitting down with just a few teachers and brainstorming possibilities for collaborating across disciplines. It's a great start. For example, Flocktown/Kossmann Elementary School art teacher Melinda Hemberger collaborated with the school's fifth-grade team to teach students about the artist Mondrian in conjunction with their study in mathematics of the Cartesian plane. Teachers at the Long Valley, New Jersey, school found that students gained a deeper understanding of both subjects when they were taught concurrently.

What You Can Do in ... 

Four Days

A week is long enough for students to complete a meaningful project or for you to roll out an initiative focused on the four C's. Take a look at your calendar as a whole and identify weeks that aren't full of other events or state testing. Then:

Lend a hand to the community.

Photos courtesy of Jonathan D. Hyatt P.S. 154, Bower Hill Elementary, Mitchell Elementary, and Estelle Elementary
This year, patients at the University of Maryland Children’s Hospital will receive a special gift from the students at Norwood Elementary School in Baltimore County. The students made monster stuffed animals, which they called “cuddle creatures,” and then wrote and illustrated stories about them. In addition to hospitals, nursing homes, community gardens, and food banks are great outlets for service learning.

**Find a way to reach at-risk students.**

Every student can benefit from the four C's, but if your school includes an at-risk population, consider following in the footsteps of the fourth- through sixth-grade teachers at Harriet Gifford Elementary School in Elgin, Illinois. These educators submitted the names of boys facing significant academic and social issues, who were then invited to join a special after-school club. In it, teachers promote teamwork, creativity, and cultural heritage as well as academic skills. The club meets weekly, and teachers report that many members have improved their math and reading scores. If the teachers at your school work together to identify the students in need of the most help, the groundwork for starting a similar club can be laid in less than a week.

**Respond to a current event.** Sometimes when an event happens in a school or community, the time to act is now. At Pennington Elementary School in Nashville, Tennessee, a devastating flood affected more than one-third of school families. Teachers responded by helping students overcome their fear of rain by partnering with the city water works department to teach children where water goes and what protections are in place to prevent floods. The students’ water works sketches combined art, science, technology, engineering, and math studies. Scrapbooks were also part of the project to help students deal with their emotions and restore memories lost by the floods.

To get your own project rolling, identify what you want students to do. Next, recruit volunteers to help gather supplies and serve as classroom assistants. Turn a community concern into a schoolwide shared experience.

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**What You Can Do in ... Four Weeks**

As you move to changes that are implemented over weeks rather than hours or days, be sure to include teachers, parents, and community partners in the planning process. Try implementing several four-week projects in the first year of incorporating the four C's and more in the second year.

**Paint a mural that matters.** Murals are perennially favorite projects, but how do you keep them tied to the curriculum and not just a fun, decorative add-on? At Estelle Elementary School in Marrero, Louisiana, a mural was the culminating project for a schoolwide study of the BP oil spill and its effect on the Louisiana coastline. Students at every grade level worked in groups to paint ceramic tiles depicting what they had learned about the state’s unique ecosystem. This process allowed more students to be involved than would have been had a mural been painted directly on a wall. In addition to current events, local history and culture can also be inspiration for a school mural.

**Study art and science in nature.** Perhaps the best way for students to learn about how plants grow and how caterpillars change is by immersing themselves in the sights and sounds of a garden. At Bower Hill Elementary School in Venetia, Pennsylvania, students learned about the Impressionists and sharpened scientific observation skills through their study in an outdoor school garden filled with flowers, vegetables, and butterflies. Over the course of four weeks, children learned how to gather plant data, made careful observations, and applied what their garden taught them to art. If you don’t have a school garden, consider visiting a community garden or park nearby.

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**What You Can Do in ... Four Months**

In four months, you can make a change that flips traditional skill-and-drill learning on its head. The key is planning in advance and breaking out what will be done each month and who will be responsible for each step along the way. If you’re new to the four C’s, pick one big goal.

**Complete a schoolwide project.**

When an entire school works to learn about a single topic, surprising connections emerge. Last fall at Oxford Elementary School in Oxford, Mississippi, students began a schoolwide study of artist Walter Anderson. Anderson was chosen because of his link to the region as well as his work as a visual artist, naturalist, writer, and traveler, which opened
up cross-curricular possibilities. Teachers across the grade levels incorporated Anderson into their lessons, everyone visited a local museum, and students collaborated on a mural in tribute to the artist. When looking for a subject for your school, think about what works for your curriculum at multiple grade levels. Where are the commonalities?

Have every student write a book. Can you imagine if every student in your school was a published author? How would it change students’ vision of themselves as readers, writers, and creators? At Orem’s Elementary School in Baltimore, educators set out to have all students publish their own books. The project was multifaceted. Teachers participated in workshops on bookmaking while working with students on drafting and revising original stories. In art class, students learned about different illustration styles. Students then published their stories using a variety of formats, from low-cost pamphlets to professionally bound books. The end result is that the students’ books have joined those in the library for others to enjoy.

Bring students from different schools together. It’s important to find other educators who share your commitment to arts education and the four C’s. Collectively, you can work to influence policy, as well as bring students together for exciting opportunities. Over the course of several months, kindergartners at Zane North Elementary School in Collingswood, New Jersey, worked with buddies at nearby Collingswood High School on a project about conquering their fears. Students at both levels read Maya Angelou’s poem *Life Doesn’t Frighten Me* and worked together to paint panels about personal superpowers. As the buddies took turns adding to their shared canvases, they learned about respectful collaboration and what it means to work in a creative partnership.

What You Can Do in ... Four Years

Imagine where you and your teachers would like to see your school in four years. Do you see students using art to enrich the study of all subjects? Write down all of the ideas, big or small, then make a plan for getting there. Here’s how:

Assess your current culture. The first step in forming a long-term plan related to the four C’s is to assess your current school culture. What is the state of arts education in your school? What are the attitudes of administrators, parents, teachers, and kids toward creativity? How strong and widespread is the goal of integrating the arts across every subject of the school’s curriculum? Meet with stakeholders and plan the change you would like to see. What steps will you and your faculty take, and what initiatives will you lead to get to the ultimate “dream space” in four years?

Embrace project-based learning. If you want to use project-based assessment, map the progress you would like to see during the next four years. A first goal might be to offer training for classroom teachers on how to infuse arts across the curriculum. Next, map out how to get parents involved and help them understand the value of project-based learning. Consider hosting a project fair or incorporating “family projects” that help parents to see how much their children learn from these experiences. You’ll also want to plan how projects will eventually make up the majority of assessments rather than standardized tests.

Name a chief creative officer. Does the title of art teacher still fit when the job has been expanded to inspire colleagues’ creativity? What would it mean if your art teacher became the “chief creative officer” who manages the infusion of creativity throughout your school? Think of a job description that includes supporting the creative endeavors of your faculty as well as students. It often takes years to make job description and responsibility changes official within school districts, so start now and map out your plan for this change over the next four years.

Principal Support

“When it comes down to it, [the success of arts education] has an awful lot to do with sustained leadership,” said UCLA professor James S. Catterall, who has published leading studies on the impact of the arts on children. “Ultimately you need to have the principal’s support for it to last. ... You also need a program that has visibility and becomes part of the school’s conversation about children, teaching and learning.”

Not every idea suggested here will be the right choice for your school. You’ll need to consider your student population, budget, and the internal and external resources available. Make the best use of time by starting with smaller changes and working up to the bigger ones. In the end, you’ll be amazed at what the four C’s can do for your students’ lives now and in the future.

Hannah Hudson writes about education and parent issues.
Together, we can Champion Creatively Alive Children. Crayola supports you with FREE resources.

Arts-infused education is critical for 21st century learning.

Our Champion Creatively Alive Children™ series helps you implement arts-infused education in your school. Visit Crayola.com/CreativelyAlive and download a free professional development program that includes five videos and guides. These resources will help you facilitate workshops and arts-infused education advocacy meetings with fellow educators, parents and community members. This program will help you transform school culture and teaching practices. Crayola is with you every step of the way as you champion creatively alive children.
CONGRATULATIONS!

In every school there's ONE PERSON who INSPIRES, NURTURES, MOTIVATES, and CELEBRATES every student.

It's you.

NAESP honors all principals featured in this special Principal supplement who Champion Creatively Alive Children™ — and we celebrate principals everywhere who make the world a better place for all children.

Thank you.