



Spring 2009 ▪ Year 3

**Solis-Cohen Elementary School
&
Philadelphia Theater Company & Philadelphia Museum of Art**

Arts Partners

Philadelphia Theater Company
Maureen Sweeney, Education Director
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Ah-Young Kim

Teaching Artists

Jan Michener, Theater artist
Mindy Beers, Theater artist
Melody Tash, Theater artist
Ben Volta, Visual artist

Teachers

Rochelle New, 4th grade
Andrea Green, 4th grade
Sandra Yeck, 4th grade
Yalon Martin, 4th grade
Robert Lewis, 4th grade
Abbie Stein, 5th grade
Aimee Lombardo, 5th grade
Rona Ginsburg, 5th grade
Cassandra Ward, 5th grade
Sandra Klassman, 5th grade
Jovita Littles, 6th grade
Anne Foti, 6th grade
Joanne Zastowney, 6th grade
Elizabeth Wetzler, Art specialist
Laverne Wood, Music specialist

Project

The purpose of the Solis-Cohen Grade 5 Arts Bridges Residency for academic year 2008-09 was to focus on the teaching and learning of two key literacy skills across the content areas of literacy, creative writing, visual arts, music and theater. Solis-Cohen teachers in grades 4, 5 and 6, teaching artists from Philadelphia Theater Company (PTC) and The Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA) together with resident arts specialists designed and implemented activities in each discipline to help teach the following targeted skills:

- Compare and contrast the use of literary elements within and among texts including characters, setting, plot, theme and point of view.
- Summarize the major ideas, themes or procedures of the text.

The arts skills that aligned with these literacy skills were:

- Know how to recognize and identify similar and different characteristics among works in the arts. (Compare/Contrast)

- Know how to communicate an informed individual opinion about the meaning of works in the arts. (Main Idea)

Literary Arts Workshops:

Literary arts workshops led by PTC teaching artists, Jan Michener, Mindy Beers and Melody Tash, used playwrighting and theater improvisation techniques to apply compare and contrast strategies to explore the development of different characters and multiple settings for scenes. In all grade levels students developed individual characters that were then incorporated into scenes, stories and plays. This process required whole group analysis of setting, plot, theme and point of view. This process strengthened students' understanding of the main idea.

Visual Arts Workshops:

In visual arts workshops led by PMA teaching artist, Ben Volta, students explored contrast, value, shape, and form through drawing and painting. A visual exploration process compared and contrasted students' drawings to images relating to each grade level's chosen topic. Each student created an individual artwork by combining a painted image with at least one linear portraiture drawing. Each class then created a large collective artwork by overlapping and combining digital scans of their individual artworks. By the end of the visual arts component of the residency, students were able to compare and contrast art elements and art principles found within their artwork and identify, articulate, and expand upon the main idea of the project in their own words.

Project Goals/Standards

Through playwrighting activities students were able to:

- Know and use fundamental playwrighting vocabulary.
- Know and demonstrate how playwrighting can communicate experiences, stories or emotions.
- Recognize, know, use and demonstrate the elements and principals of playwrighting to produce, revise and revise original dialogue, scenes and plays.
- Identify subject matter, symbols and ideas from diverse cultures and historical periods.

Through visual art activities students were able to:

- Use, analyze and evaluate elements, principals and styles of art to communicate ideas and experiences.
- Describe and analyze how personal and cultural experiences influence the development of the individual's artwork and the artwork of others.
- Understand that there are various purposes for creating works of visual art.
- Create art based on historical and cultural ideas.

Students were also able to:

- Identify similarities and differences in the meanings of common terms used in visual art and theater.
- Compare multiple purposes for creating works of art.
- Strengthen their ability to collaborate and respect each other's ideas.

Project Theme

Participating teachers for each grade level chose topic areas and/or themes for their class's Arts Bridges project. *Underground Prophets* was the 4th grade topic and they worked with content from their History Hunters program, specifically the Johnson House and its connection to the Underground Railroad. Grade 5's theme was: *Because We Are All Different, We Are All the Same* and their project began with all classes reading *There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom* by Louis Sachar. Arts workshops focused on reasons for bullying and constructive, peaceful alternatives to bullying situations. In grade 6 classes analyzed the genre of fairytales and demonstrated understanding of the genre's elements by making the twisting of those elements the content for their own *Frumpled Fairytales*. Each of the literary themes was interpreted through visual art projects including drawing, painting and a whole class project that incorporated individual student work.

Student Work Created

In the Literary Arts workshops across grade levels, students were engaged in multiple pre-writing activities such as sequencing through tableaux, creating character profiles and round-robin style class stories, as well as brainstorming potential action. Each grade level produced student authored dramatic work, with the specific type of work being determined by the teachers' assessment of their students' needs and abilities. In the 4th grade 2 classes wrote group scenes, 2 classes wrote paired interviews, and one class produced individually authored spoken word poems. In grade 5 all classes wrote and revised at least two scenes. Each 6th grade class authored their own *Frumpled Fairytale*, determining the structure and plotline as a class but writing scenes that for a full play in small groups and pairs.

In the Visual Art workshops students in all grade levels created two individual pieces that were incorporated into a third whole class work. Each grade level's visual art project reflected the specific content chosen by teachers from their respective curricula. Students concluding project involved combining the drawings of all their classmates together to create collaborative artworks that were unified and harmonious.

Assessment and Evaluation

In addition to assessment documents created and disseminated by the School District of Philadelphia and PAEP, the Arts Bridges team at Solis-Cohen employed the following:

- Student generated rubrics for visual art and projects
- 'On Your Feet' surveys to gather specific response data in the theater workshops
- Guided journal entries assigned by classroom teachers, teaching artists, and arts specialists
- Observation checklists of arts workshops completed by PTC and PMA as the residency coordinators
- A post residency reflection collecting students' perceived connections between art making, reading and writing as reflected in letters written to the teaching artists.