

Spring 2007



**Julia de Burgos Elementary School
&
COSACOSA art at large, Inc.**

Teaching artists

Uva Coles, poet and spoken word artist
Homer Jackson, multi-media artist

Participating teachers:

Gerald Webster, 4th grade
Joyce Dobisch, 4th grade
Mirtha Castro, 4th grade
Jerry Fluellen, music specialist
Jennifer Tsui, art specialist

Project Purpose

Fourth grade students from the Julia de Burgos School will collaborate with poet Uva Coles and interdisciplinary artist Homer Jackson to create a CD of original songs and spoken word pieces portraying creative ways in which to overcome obstacles. The topic of Overcoming Obstacles builds directly upon stories in the Creative Thinking section of the 4th grade reader. Students will read, research, write and perform about ways in which to think creatively, to discover their own innate inner strengths, and (to quote the book) finding their "ability to enhance our environment for the better." Also created will be an accompanying CD booklet with original visual art by the participants.

Project Goals

Goals for Overcoming Obstacles include:

- 1) Improve students' academic performance in reading.
- 2) Increase and enrich students' vocabulary and understanding of imagery.
- 3) Deepen students' understanding of relationships among various types of writing and music.
- 4) Enhance students' creativity and higher order thinking.
- 5) Enhance students' leadership and teamwork skills.
- 6) Improve students' attitudes towards self and school, fostering pro-social behavior.

Project Theme

The topic of Overcoming Obstacles builds directly upon stories in the Creative Thinking section of the 4th grade reader. Students will read, research, write and perform about ways in which to think creatively, to discover their own innate inner strengths, and (to quote the book) finding their "ability to enhance our environment for the better."

Specific Content and Activities

Using multiple artistic disciplines, *Overcoming Obstacles* will explore ideas vital to addressing both individual challenges and community needs. Ms. Coles and Mr. Jackson, along with Julia de Burgos School teachers and COSACOSA staff, will spend over three months engaging students in dialogues about personal meaning, community values, and the qualities of leadership. Presentations on the history and forms of story telling (e.g., oral, visual, musical) will engage students in the artistic process. The project will 1) impart new artistic skills to the school community, 2) foster interest in the arts as a means of self-expression, 3) enable students to better understand and convey the challenges they experience, as well as those of others, 4) increase students' exploration of the life choices they face. *Overcoming Obstacles* will focus the students on listening, observing, remembering, practicing, interpreting, and deciding -- essential survival skills from the earliest of times -- while imparting to them the artistic skills necessary to deliver their ideas to the larger community.

Standards Addressed

Music:

- 1) Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music;
- 2) Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music;
- 3) Improvising melodies and variations; composing and arranging music within specified guidelines;
- 4) Reading and notating music -- understanding and experiencing the traditional tools and modern technologies used, as well as applying this knowledge and learned skills to the creation of collaborative works of music;
- 5) Listening to, analyzing, and describing music; identifying other works similar in technique and content to the pieces being created;
- 6) Evaluating music and music performances; understanding the similarities, distinctions, and connections among different pieces, including combining forms to convey a theme or idea;
- 7) Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts; knowing and applying a common vocabulary among these disciplines;
- 8) Understanding music in relation to history and culture -- how music shapes and reflects society and everyday life, including identifying and describing how music communicates similarities and differences among various people, places, and times;
- 9) Analyzing how culture, history, and community needs impact forms, techniques, and purposes of music;
- 10) Understanding the sensory elements, organizational principles, and expressive qualities of music, and how they can be organized to convey meaning through a variety of media and technology.

Visual Arts:

- 1) Understanding the sensory elements, organizational principles, and expressive qualities of the arts, and how they can be organized to convey meaning through a variety of media and technology;
- 2) Understanding the similarities, distinctions, and connections among different art forms, including combining several art forms to convey a singular theme or idea;
- 3) Understanding and experiencing traditional tools and modern technologies used various art forms, specifically photography and drawing, as well as applying this knowledge to create collaborative art;
- 4) Identifying, describing and analyzing works similar in technique and content to the work being created;

- 5) Knowing and applying common vocabulary among social studies, the arts and the humanities;
- 6) Understanding how the arts shape and reflect history, society and everyday life, including identifying and describing how the arts communicate similarities and differences among various people, places, and times;
- 7) Analyzing how culture, historical events, and community needs impact forms, techniques, and purposes of works in the arts

English Language Arts

- 1) Understanding how literary elements and techniques are used to convey meaning
 - to research, identify and locate appropriate texts (literary, historical, personal documents) for the purpose of understanding community life
 - to identify and use text formats, organizational structures and graphic features to comprehend information
 - to identify basic facts and ideas contained in selected texts and use them to generate essential questions about community life for the project's intergenerational dialogue
 - to demonstrate understanding of selected topics and texts by analyzing and presenting varying positions and evidence found and by extrapolating this information to apply to the community today;
- 2) Using correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and structure in writing -
 - to understand the meaning of and apply key vocabulary across multi-disciplinary applications
 - to write using well-developed content appropriate for the topic, including elaborated/properly cited references
 - to sustain logical order for each written text (e.g., introduction, issue development, and conclusion), as well as within sentences and between paragraphs;
- 3) Composing well-organized, coherent writing to convey stories and information to a larger audience -
 - to differentiate opinion from fact using a variety of texts and media
 - to compare and analyze how different media offer unique perspectives on the information to be presented
 - to produce project related texts in at least three different forms (e.g., poetry/rap, narrative stories, and persuasive pieces)
- 4) Listening and speaking effectively for a variety of situations and audiences
 - to develop and practice interview questions; interview community elders and peers
 - to contribute to class and community discussions, responding to, listening to and acknowledging the contributions of others
 - to present and defend written work, using skills appropriate to formal speech situations.
- 5) Locating, organizing, evaluating and using information from various sources to answer questions, solve problems and communicate ideas
 - to determine valid resources for researching the project (e.g., historical documents, media, literature, and community interviews, electronic resources)
 - to analyze acquired information, ideas, and opinions for relevance
 - to organize, summarize and present the main ideas from research.

- 6) Applying information and ideas to communicate in a multiple disciplines and formats
 - to produce project related texts in at least three different forms (e.g., poetry/rap, narrative stories, and persuasive pieces) and translate/illustrate those texts with musical elements
 - to document project research and interviews in multidisciplinary formats (e.g., note-taking, audio recordings, photography, and illustration);
- 7) Planning, writing, and delivering oral, written, and multimedia projects -
 - to analyze best techniques to create understandable presentations for specific audiences
 - to document project creation in multidisciplinary formats (e.g., reflective journaling and other writing, photography, and illustration)
 - to design and participate in final project presentation to the community at large.

Applied Learning

- 1) Solving problems using the arts as a tool to investigate issues, and as a forum to find solutions;
- 2) Communicating and interpreting information and ideas -- both as creators and as receivers -- observing, analyzing, evaluating, critiquing and interacting;
- 3) Using artistic techniques and technology to access information, process ideas, and communicate results;
- 4) Working on teams and learning to contribute both as an individual and as a member of a group;
- 5) Recognizing and applying connections -- between disciplines, among individuals, and within communities;
- 6) Reviewing ones own and ones peers' progress in work activities and evaluating final products;
- 7) Discovering and designing connections between the school and the larger community.

Student Work Created

Working individually and in small groups, students will investigate the qualities of leadership and issues of concern to their neighborhood; conduct intergenerational research and record interviews to select concepts essential to the advancement of their community; create and write stories and poetry to illustrate important concepts and narrative ideas; and develop a story and song CD through performance and new media site-specific to the concerns of the neighborhood. The resulting CD will be professionally replicated, packaged and distributed nationwide, as well as throughout the school community. An accompanying photographic exhibition will be on permanent display at the school and be featured in the CD catalogue.

II. Roles of Partners

Jerry Fluellen, Music Specialist, will design, organize, and supervise multidisciplinary music activities relating to the project, its techniques, and its theme. He will collaborate with directly with Ms. Coles, Mr. Jackson, and students in the design and creation of the CD.

Jennifer Tsui, Art Teacher, will design, organize and supervise multidisciplinary visual art activities relating to the project, its techniques and its theme. She will collaborate with directly with Ms. Coles, Mr. Jackson, and students in the design and creation of the CD booklet.

Mirtha Castro, Joyce Dobisch, and Jerry Webster, Classroom Teachers, will design, organize and supervise reading, writing, and social studies activities for participating students relating to the project theme.

Uva Coles, Literary Teaching Artist, will guide students through the history and techniques of story-telling (e.g., oral, literary visual, musical), as well as in performance techniques. She will collaborate with Mr. Jackson in supervising creation and production of the CD and accompanying booklet.

Homer Jackson, Teaching Artists, will guide students in musically setting and performing their poetry, as well as in new media recording techniques. He will collaborate with Ms. Coles in supervising creation and production of the CD and accompanying booklet.

COSACOSA art at large, Inc., PAEP partner organization, will coordinate all project activities, and provide all project materials, including CD replication and booklet production. COSACOSA also will engender the participation of community leaders and guest artists in the project as per the teaching artists' requests.

III. Project Timeline

February 2007	Planning/coordination meetings among project artists, school administration, teachers, and COSACOSA staff and advisors.
February 23 – March 7, 2007	Begin project implementation -thematic exploration, collaborative formulation of project plan; sample analyses; student experimentation with writing projects.
March 12 – April 6, 2007	PSSA testing and spring break
April 9 - May 31, 2007	Story and song writing, performance and recording; digital production technology instruction; project mapping and post-production. Project booklet design.
June 2007	CD replication; booklet printing; live performance and video documentation of student work.

6. Project Assessment and Evaluation

Outputs:

- 1) Student-created song and spoken word CD
- 2) Student-created CD booklet using visual art skills
- 3) Live performance of spoken word and song
- 4) Individual student journal/portfolios
- 5) Enhanced student motivation for learning
- 6) Enhanced student peer collaboration
- 7) Enhanced student cross-disciplinary tool set for development of a personal voice for creative expression

Measurable Outcomes:

- 1) 80% improvement in literacy specific to poetic forms, including use of figurative language, vocabulary, and comprehension

Indicators

- benchmark test for figurative language in the form of a poem
- qualitative analysis of use of vocabulary, sentence variety, and figurative language in

- journal and writing assignments
- 2) 80% improvement in listening skills and the ability to follow directions
Indicator
 - classroom observation within and without the bounds of the project
 - 3) 90% improvement in motivation for learning
Indicators
 - attendance
 - classroom participation
 - assignment completion
 - multiplicity of involvement with project activities
 - 4) 90% improvement in peer collaboration and teamwork skills
Indicators
 - attitude survey pre- and post-project
 - observation in project setting (e.g., of use of affirmative language, conflict resolution)
 - observation in scenario tests (e.g., team-building theater games relating to the project)
 - 5) 80% improvement in critical thinking skills
Indicators
 - attitude survey pre- and post-project
 - observation in project setting
 - observation in scenario tests
 - 6) 80% improvement in cross-disciplinary appreciation of creative expression (i.e., the relationship of poetry, spoken word, music, and visual arts)
Indicators
 - analysis of integration of various disciplines in student projects
 - pre- and post-project assessment of use language/visual/musical connections
 - observation in scenario tests