



Spring 2009 ▪ Year 3

**Julia de Burgos Elementary School
&
CosaCosa art at large & Philadelphia Young Playwrights**

Arts Partners

CosaCosa art at large
Kim Niemela, Director
Philadelphia Young Playwrights
Amy Hodgdon, Education Director

Teaching Artists

Sandi Gilliard, Playwright
Anjoli Santiago, Playwright
Lee Fogel, Visual artist

Teachers

Josephine Bae, 4th grade
Mirtha Castro, 4th grade
Kelly Cernic, 5th grade
Christina Golasa, 5th grade
Jessica Streeper, 5th grade
Karen Strohm, 5th grade
Carmen Carrion, 6th grade
Lee Fountain, 6th grade
Gail Cantor, 6th grade
Janine Wyznyski, 6th grade
Jean Fontaine, Art specialist
Dmytro Terlechyj, Music specialist

Project

COSACOSA, Philadelphia Young Playwrights, and the 4th, 5th and 6th grade teachers collaboratively developed and implemented experiential playwriting and visual art projects that strengthened students' grasp of three targeted literacy skills. The three literacy skills were:

- Summarize major ideas, themes and concepts from texts and identify appropriate supportive details
- Compare and contrast literary elements among various texts
- Make inferences or draw conclusions based on information from text.

Theater artist Sandra Gillard-Davis and interdisciplinary artist Lee Fogel supported and guided students' creation of original art work and dramatic writing as means to help students strengthen their understanding and application of: 1) the three targeted literacy skills; 2) other critical literacy skills, such as writing and revising; as well as 3) additional critical skills such as collaboration and critical thinking. The project improved students' basic literacy skills by making connections between selected theater/playwriting and visual art concepts and skills. Through interdisciplinary, cross-referential learning experiences, students acquired a hands-on understanding of the organizing principles and expressive qualities of playwriting and photography, as well as understanding of how both art forms can be used to convey meaning.

Using the creative mediums of monologue writing and photography, the students investigated the project theme of *Working Together* as means to strengthen their understanding of the three targeted literacy skills. Sixth grade students also created scenes and, as a means to both develop and revise their monologues and scenes, they produced three-dimensional metaphor boxes to symbolically represent their dramatic writing.

Project Learning Goals/Standards

The students applied each of the targeted literacy skills in their creation of original art work to learn by doing. The learning goals and standards for these projects were:

- Improve students' ability to summarize major ideas, themes and concepts from texts with appropriate supportive details
- Improve students' ability to compare and contrast literary elements among various texts
- Improve students' ability to make inferences and/or draw conclusions based on information from text
- Deepen students' understanding of relationships among reading, writing and the arts
- Strengthen students' writing skills
- Enhance students' critical thinking skills
- Enhance students' listening abilities and their ability to follow directions
- Enhance students' peer collaborations and teamwork skills
- Improve students' attitudes towards self and school, fostering pro-social behavior
- Acquaint students with a basic understanding of the key elements of multiple art forms.

The following theater, visual art and music skills, which the students utilized in the project, connected to and supported the identified literacy objectives described above.

- Know and use the elements and principles of each form to create works of art
- Recognize, know and use, and demonstrate the elements and principles of each form to produce, review and revise an original work of art
- Know and use the fundamental vocabulary of each form
- Know and demonstrate how each form can communicate experiences, stories or emotions
- Analyze a work from its historical and cultural perspective
- Compare similar and contrasting important aspects of works in the arts based on a set of guidelines using a comprehensive vocabulary and critical response.

Project Theme

The theme *Working Together* related both to the literacy core curriculum and to the classroom environment. Literary elements worked together to make a story in the same way that individuals need to work together to create a positive community/nation/ world. Students read, researched, wrote, and created new works about ways to work collaboratively in a variety of situations.

Student Work Created

Working individually and in small groups, students investigated aspects of working together in their classroom and their neighborhood through photography and playwriting; conducted intergenerational research and document interviews to select concepts essential to the project theme; took photographs that illustrated thematic concepts and ideas; created and wrote monologues and scenes to illustrate thematic concepts and ideas; and developed a book of their original dramatic writings and photographs. The Teaching Artists, along with Julia de Burgos teachers and partner organization staff, engaged students in dialogues about personal meaning, shared values, and team-building. A sharing session in which the students “perform” their monologues, with accompanying photographic images and music concluded the project. A permanent exhibition of student writings, photographs, and drawings was developed as an environmental graphic for the school.

Each student maintained an artist’s notebook (as playwrights and as artists). Playwright students recorded and reflected on their own writing. Additionally each student used the notebook as a professional artist would to record ideas, reflect, imagine, etc. Students applied and honed the three literacy skills as well in the maintenance of this notebook.

Project Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment Tools:

- Students’ individually authored monologues and scenes and revisions
- Students’ completed artwork
- Students’ artist notebooks (self reflection, assessment, drawings, revisions, art-making process, etc.)
- Students’ oral revision feedback provided to their peers.
- COSACOSA weekly reflective writing response questions.
- Young Playwrights end of project survey (written response)
- Benchmark Tests, and other District testing tools

Measurable Outcomes

1. Students improved their ability to summarize major ideas, themes and concepts from texts with appropriate supportive details

Indicators

- benchmark scores
 - qualitative analysis of revisions in journal and writing assignments using existing writing rubric
 - peer to peer revision feedback
 - review of students’ drafts and revisions
2. Improvement in the ability to compare and contrast literary elements among various texts and pieces of literature.

Indicators

- benchmark scores
 - qualitative analysis of revisions in journal and writing assignments using existing writing rubric
 - peer to peer revision feedback
 - review of students’ drafts and revisions
3. Improvement in students’ ability to make inferences or draw conclusions based on information from text

Indicators:

- benchmark scores
 - qualitative analysis of revisions in journal and writing assignments using existing writing rubric
 - peer to peer revision feedback
4. Strengthened writing skills

Indicators:

- qualitative analysis of revisions in journal and writing assignments using existing writing rubric
 - review of students' drafts and revisions
 - peer to peer revision feedback
 - benchmark scores and other District testing tools
5. Improvement in listening skills and the ability to follow directions

Indicators

- classroom participation
 - assignment completion
 - teacher observation within and without the bounds of the project
6. Improvement in motivation for learning

Indicators

- attendance
 - classroom participation
 - assignment completion
 - multiplicity of involvement with project activities
 - teacher observation within and without the bounds of the project.
7. Improvement in peer collaboration and teamwork skills.

Indicators

- observation in project setting (e.g., of use of affirmative language, conflict resolution, range of peer to peer feedback)
 - teacher observation within and without the bounds of the project
8. Improvement in critical thinking skills

Indicators

- qualitative analysis of content in reflective journal and writing assignments using existing writing rubric
 - peer to peer revision feedback
 - observation in project setting
 - review of students' drafts and revisions
 - review of students' advice for revising (journal entry)
 - teacher observation within and without the bounds of the project
9. Improvement in cross-disciplinary appreciation of creative expression (i.e., the relationship of writing, music, and visual arts)

Indicators

- analysis of integration of various disciplines in student projects
10. Acquisition of a basic understanding of the key elements of multiple art forms.

Indicators

- qualitative analysis of students' application of these elements in playwrighting and art making assignments using existing writing rubric
- peer to peer revision feedback
- review of students' drafts and revisions
- review of students' advice for revising (journal entry)
- teacher observation within and without the bounds of the project