

The OMA Outlook

Opening Minds Through The Arts



COORDINATOR'S LETTER

We hope our readers will enjoy the second edition of *The OMA OUTLOOK*. For this issue, we will feature a few of the 29 schools that have chosen to implement the OMA model on at least a partial basis. Although not included in the OMA research, at these sites there has been recognition of the importance of using the Fine Arts to create better learning opportunities for students. Principals at these schools have hired a music specialist to work with teachers and students to improve student achievement through utilization of OMA generated activities.

In addition, we will introduce you to Carroll Rinehart, a wonderful OMA family partner who contributes much time and energy to OMA. As always, we will share the good news about OMA and offer opportunities to our readers to support the OMA Project.

Many wonderful things have happened since the last *OMA Outlook*, not the least of which was a gift from **The Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation** based in California. A benefactor had decided to give \$150,000. in new instruments to an Arizona school district. After learning about the OMA project in Tucson Unified School District, he chose TUSD to receive the instruments.

In August, **Joan Ashcraft and I** will do a **presentation** on OMA at the **National Arts for Learning Consortium** (as their guests) being held in Pacifica, California. In November, **State Superintendent Tom Horne** will hold a "best practices" **Mega Conference** in Phoenix. OMA administrators have been invited to present there as well. Interest is growing because our research demonstrates results.

In closing, please accept our thanks for your support of OMA.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Kemmeries, OMA Coordinator

OMA Has Great New Materials to Share

We hope you enjoyed the **OMA brochure** that we mailed early in June. The feedback has been very good and we would love to hear your comments as well. Late in June we completed "**The OMA Video**", a six-minute review of our project. We owe many individuals a debt of thanks, particularly **Anna Rivera**, Lawrence Elementary principal, who made it possible for teacher, **John Torrejon** (with student assistants), to film and edit the project. We'd love to have you see it.

Please visit our newly created **OMA website** by going to www.omaproject.org. where you will be able to learn about OMA and be given several opportunities to become involved as an OMA supporter.

Finally, a **Speakers' Bureau** has been organized as we are looking for all opportunities to share the OMA story with service groups, foundations, and non-profit organizations that support the Arts. If you are able to help us book a presentation, please call either **Mark Heyman** at **885-9836** or **Sharon Volda** at **225-4909**. Volunteer callers are also needed.

TAX-CREDIT TIME ONCE EACH QUARTER

Many individuals must pay quarterly taxes, but may not realize that the **Arizona tax-credit legislation** allows them to make a donation to a local public school of any amount up to \$200. per individual or \$250. for a couple filing jointly. This wonderful Arizona law allows taxpayers to support their schools at **absolutely no cost to the taxpayer**.

When you pay your quarterly Arizona **state taxes** on September 15, please consider sending a check to **an OMA school** to help support the school with the OMA Project. At year's end, you will owe less taxes or you will receive a refund. In the meantime, your gift will support OMA in its efforts to improve educational opportunities through the arts. **Remember this opportunity applies only to Arizona state taxes.**

Often, people wait until the end of the year to make donations because they want to keep their resources at work as long as possible. OMA has activities all year long that require ongoing support. Please consider this painless way to participate in this complete **WIN/WIN** opportunity. The form on the back of this newsletter walks you through the process so that you will receive your tax-credit documentation at once.

Dr. Carroll Rinehart, OMA Opera Consultant and an OMA Founder

By *Elaine Resnick*

Having worked in the field of music education for **fifty-five years**, Dr. Carroll Rinehart knows well the benefits of music as a tool in learning and education. During his long career, he's found that music in the curriculum does affect learning. He has searched for the reasons this happens. His conclusion: music produces energy, and energy in turn enhances the memory systems and achievement of students. As an Opera Consultant, he brings his experience and knowledge to the OMA Project.

Dr. Rinehart has found that introducing opera into the classroom is extremely effective in promoting learning. Music is a learning tool when writing and performing operas. As students write their own operas, the language is reinforced by the music. They increase their auditory perception, an integral part of learning. As students increase their perception, they open up their ability to learn.

Dr. Rinehart stresses that the project must be real to the students and not busy work. It must produce excitement in the classroom. When students are bored, or stressed or fearful, memory shuts down. Projects that promote excitement help children to develop their own human sensitivity and responsibility and promote risk taking.

The next step is to **understand exactly** how learning is being facilitated through music. Dr. Rinehart has contacted the Arizona State Department of Education and has begun working with doctors and psychologists in the fields of neurology and learning to document just why music promotes learning. The **OMA Project**, with its significant gains in student learning, **provides a lab** to further this study.

Fine Arts at Kellond

By Sharon Steehler, 3rd Grade Teacher

Collaboration is a natural way of teaching at Kellond. Recently we completed the "Asian Art Adventure" which was implemented in six classes in the spring of 2002. A team of teachers from Kellond attended the Tucson Unified School District's Summer Fine Arts Institute (FASI) in June of 2001.

Attending the institute in itself is an inspirational and extremely beneficial experience, but attending also qualifies teams to apply for a grant from the *Tucson Arts Connection* and *UA Presents*. The programs offers classes opportunities to attend several matinee performances as well as work with many of Tucson's finest performing artists.

We received the grant, and our *Asian Art Adventure* began. Team members embraced the concept that "the

arts stimulate learning and improve overall academic performance" because we have seen first hand the profound impact that integrating the arts has on students academically, socially, and spiritually.

The team consisted of six teachers, the art teacher and the librarian. Each team member developed a lesson plan that was implemented in a fine arts exchange format where students went to a different class each Friday for eight weeks. The lessons (all geared to the Japanese themes of simplicity, reverence for nature, tradition, and balance) included haiku, Japanese brush painting, kite making, origami, drama, mask making, lanterns, flower arranging, Japanese school, tea ceremony, and watercolor. At the end of eight weeks our school put on a gala evening "Fine Arts Showcase" where student art, dance, music, and poetry was displayed, and it was a huge success.

That same year I had the opportunity to "loop" my class from the year before, second grade up to third grade. I had nineteen of my 25 students for two years. During that same two years I began exposing my students to the arts as part of their regular curriculum. I tracked scores on the Stanford 9 test in the areas of reading, math and language. The nineteen returning **students in my class improved 81 percentage points in reading, 171 percentage points in math, and 131 percentage points in language**. I believe this is a direct result of the students' immersion into the arts, a feat that could not have been accomplished without collaboration.

Benita Silvyn

By Sonya Sapin

Ms. Benita Silvyn has worked **ten years** for University of Arizona's *UApresents*, and her contributions to OMA have been invaluable. She co-directs, with Joan Ashcraft from TUSD, the Fine Arts Summer Institute (**FASI**) for teachers, held partly on the UA campus and partly at various Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) schools.

Many OMA teachers and students regularly attend the *UApresents* school matinee series. OMA teachers have participated in the in-service opportunities offered by local teaching artists prior to each matinee and at FASI. In the 2003-04 school year, *UApresents* will be working with the OMA 5th grades, so that every student will experience live performances at Centennial Hall and be participants in interactive classroom workshops with local teaching artists

The arts-infused curriculum enriches the learning experience and increases student achievement. The arts are important in the development of higher level thinking skills, and their integration into the core curriculum increases creativity and students self-esteem. It is also a way to share other cultures and traditions.

"I grew up in New York City where I attended many performances. I strongly believe that every child

should have the opportunity to experience the arts on a regular basis, “ says Benita.

OMA Comes to Mission View **By Patty Mentz, Principal**

Music has long been a priority at Mission View. We bought instruments and implemented orchestra for all 4th graders under the direction of our outstanding instrumental, Teresa Christy. The Tucson Symphony Women’s Association, along with our tax-credit program, allowed us to offer Orff lessons for our pre-school through second grades.

This year we added a fabulous Music Specialist, Vicky Campbell, who is trained in the OMA model. She gives music lessons to all students once a week. She directs 3 choruses (3rd, 4th, and 5th grades) and 2 after-school choirs, and teaches all 3rd graders how to play the recorder. In addition, next year band and orchestra will be part of the regular 5th grade curriculum. Every student will participate.

Vicky also works with all teachers to create multidisciplinary activities that teach the core curriculum. A recent writing exercise to improve vocabulary and creativity used a Beethoven symphony to inspire use of descriptive language other than common words like “happy” and “sad”. Teachers extended the lesson to include sentence structure and other vocabulary building activities. All writing activities are based on the six-trait writing model used in TUSD.

Vicky has already applied for 3 Artists in Residence Grants through the Arizona Commission of the Arts in the hope of expanding the opportunities for performance experiences.

In early analysis, it appears that our 2003 reading test scores have significantly improved in grades 3, 4, and 5. I have also noticed other important changes. Our students have learned how to behave better, as an audience and in performance. The overall success of the program has been enhanced by the consistent support of the teachers. OMA is definitely worth the resources we use to implement it.

A DIFFERENT FORMAT, BUT STILL OMA **By Kathryn Halstead**

At Reynolds and Lyons Elementary Schools, OMA lessons are being provided a little differently. The program was developed by music specialist, Mrs. Kathryn Halstead, who serves both schools. Under her plan, music/core-curriculum lessons are provided to 300 Kinder and first grade students twice a week, and 400 second or third grade students once a week. Music students are taken from the classroom, allowing the teacher to work with only half of the class providing additional opportunity for individualized instruction. Teachers at both schools are very appreciative of the program.

The music instruction involves the elements of music: rhythm, pitch, melody, mood, and movement. During music lessons, the music specialist reinforces reading, language, and math skills which are being taught in the regular classroom. Alphabet, letter sounds, words, vocabulary, sentences, patterns, and counting are emphasized. Children make up their own patterns using words, instruments or movement for other children to duplicate.

Listening is reinforced in each lesson. The children reproduce sounds made for them and identify their sources. They are instructed in reading music notation and using notation to play instruments. They learn to watch the director and to follow directions for a group performance. They also learn to anticipate the moment for a sound to be made and to wait for the appropriate time to make the sound. Learning to work cooperatively, in the context of performance, is something they enjoy tremendously.

OMA’s Evaluation Report for 2003

In October of 2002, OMA published its first annual Evaluation and Research Report, prepared by a neutral, outside evaluator, WestEd. This requirement was a component of our OMA grant funded by the Arts in Education Model and Dissemination Grants Program in Washington, D.C. From its inception, the OMA Project was charged with evaluating two major goals: increasing teacher effectiveness and raising student achievement.

Our first year results were so impressive that WestEd ran all of the data twice because they could not imagine such positive results in all three schools in only one year of research. However, the OMA Project had been operating at Peter Howell and Corbett for nearly two years before the research grant was secured in 2001. Most impressive was the measurable success in assisting second language students in the areas of reading and writing in English. All students in research schools outperformed all students in the control schools, but the most dramatic differences were in scores of Hispanic students.

We eagerly await the 2003 test scores and evaluation report on the **three research schools, Howell, Corbett and Lynn-Urquides** to see if the improvement in both test scores and teacher effectiveness continues. The research required the inclusion of 3 control schools, matched to the research schools in every demographic detail.

The January issue of OMA Outlook will feature the 2003 Evaluation Report.

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*“Integrating the Arts into the Core Curriculum
Improves Student Achievement.”*

Please Send Your “OMA” Tax Credit Donations to:
Dr. Joan Ashcraft, TUSD Fine and Performing Arts
Tucson Unified School District
2025 East Winsett
Tucson, Arizona 85719



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In order to receive a tax-credit for your Arizona taxes, **your check must be made out to a school.**
(Write: “OMA” in memo section) To date the OMA schools include: Banks, Blenman, Booth/Fickett, Borman, Cavett, Corbett, Davidson, Duffy, Dunham, Fort Lowell, Johnson, Keen, Kellond, Lawrence, Lynn/Urquides, Lyons, Menlo Park, Mission View, Ochoa, Oyama, Peter Howell, Pueblo Gardens, Reynolds, Richey, Robins, Rogers, Van Buskirk, Whitmore, and Wright.

You will be sent a receipt acknowledging your contribution