

The OMA Outlook

Opening Minds Through The Arts



COORDINATOR'S LETTER

Dear OMA Friends and Supporters.

We are excited about Volume Four of the OMA Outlook. Good news continues to abound. In our last issue, we shared exciting news about the Stanford 9 scores of our OMA school students. Because of the significant results demonstrating that OMA students consistently scored higher in all tested areas than those students enrolled in demographically matched control schools, OMA has found itself featured by state and national educational leaders like Rod Paige, Secretary of Education and Tom Horne, Arizona's Superintendent of Public Instruction. Several articles in local and Phoenix papers have told of Mr. Horne's plans to make every school in Arizona an OMA school. In this issue, articles are written by classroom teachers in our OMA schools. WestEd, the research firm hired for evaluations also studied teacher effectiveness in OMA schools as compared to control schools. Once again, statistically different levels of best practice were observed in classes of OMA teachers as compared to schools without the treatment. Not only is OMA changing the lives of children, it is having a very positive impact on teachers! In January, Joan Ashcraft and I participated in an Arts in Education Partnership (AEP) meeting in Dallas as guests of the organization. OMA will represent AEP on a national website of "best practices" being created by Arts for Learning (www.arts4learning.org). At the meeting, our federal oversight officer asked us to stand and be recognized for the incredible work being done in the OMA project. Please enjoy the issue and delight in knowing that you are a part of something that is having an important impact on children in Tucson. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Kemmeries
 OMA Project Coordinator

ASSIST OMA THROUGH TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS AND MORE

By *Carolyn Kemmeries*

Thanks to each of you who sent a donation through the Arizona Tax Credit Plan. When the last check was posted and the books for 2003 were closed, we had banked just over \$73,000 to assist our OMA schools in the hiring of artists, purchasing of instruments and materials, and providing fine arts performance experiences for our grateful students.

A **fifth grade student** from Howell Elementary wrote to thank us for OMA and said, "The OMA curriculum has changed our school into a superb learning environment. I feel **so lucky to have learned to play, read, and write music** and to appreciate all forms and styles of art." He also noted, "Music and art are languages everyone knows so that even students who don't know English yet feel comfortable".

On the back of this letter is a form for an early tax-credit contribution. **However**, now that **OMA has reached non-profit status**, you are able to make a **TAX-DEDUCTIBLE** donation. This is an important step for OMA and we hope it will increase options for our supporters. Please remember that student needs don't wait until December.

Finally, TUSD Superintendent Dr. Stan Paz, is working with business and community leaders to determine the feasibility of presenting a bond and override package in November. A phone survey will be conducted to determine what areas of education are most important to families and voters. When such a survey was taken several years ago, fine arts topped the list as most important. If you receive such a call, please participate in the survey and let the caller know how important the arts are to this community and to children. If an override is placed on the ballot, we hope each of you will support it with fine arts at the center.



GENE JONES, OMA'S FOUNDING FATHER

Without the generosity and leadership of Gene Jones, local developer and philanthropist, Opening Minds through the Arts (OMA) would not exist. Over four years ago, when Gene was serving as the Board President for Tucson Symphony Orchestra, he went to a conference as a TSO delegate and found himself in a breakout session featuring a program called The Bolton School Project. He became intrigued with the collaboration between the Winston-Salem Symphony Orchestra, Bolton School, and the work being done to raise student achievement of Bolton students.

Upon his return, he contacted Carroll Rinehart, opera specialist and TSO board member, and asked for help in making something like Bolton happen for the students in Tucson. That partnership began the journey that Gene has generously supported and spearheaded in TUSD. Gene's vision is to make the OMA experience available to all children. To that end, he has also funded the process of creating a not-for-profit organization that will greatly enhance the ability of OMA to seek funds from foundations and other organizations not willing to donate to public school districts.

The OMA name and logo have been trademarked and the IRS has determined that Opening Minds through the Arts (OMA) meets all of the requirements for **tax-exempt status**. This is a great step forward in our ability to make OMA more widely available and positions this project to take a national role in ensuring that arts experiences and curriculum will play a key role in the lives of our children. **Thank you, Gene!!**

HOWELL TEAM TRAVELS TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

By *Eve Long* and *Christina Diaz*

A team from Howell Elementary (Jan Vesely, principal, John Snavelly, music specialist, and teachers, Christina Diaz and Eve Long) traveled to Washington, D.C. as guests of *Arts Education Partnership (AEP)*, to attend a three-day workshop/ idea exchange with nine other arts-integrated schools selected as national model programs succeeding in high poverty schools.

The visit provided an opportunity to learn more about how other schools use the arts as tools to enrich and extend learning. The Howell team was proud to represent Opening Minds Through the Arts (OMA), because it featured the most comprehensive academic curriculum of any program there. OMA is unique because it is built on children's neurological development, supporting brain-based learning while aligned to core state standards for achievement.

The following elements were identified by all nine sites as critical to the success of effective arts-integrated programs:

- **Teacher involvement.** Teachers are active participants not observers. Teachers extend lessons into regular curriculum, using the arts to reach multiple intelligences.
- **High Quality Arts.** Inclusion of high quality artistic experiences for all students is embedded in the model.
- **Integration.** Students understand how information is interrelated. The arts allow for creative expression and provide opportunities to create and respond to information that is interdisciplinary.
- **Strong Instructional Leadership.** A principal well versed on research related to student achievement and committed to using the arts as a mechanism to extend and enrich learning is at the center.

AEP held the meeting to better understand what each school is doing with the arts to achieve such high results. AEP is compiling the information, along with other data, to be used in a report scheduled for nation-wide distribution later this year. It is a tremendous honor for TUSD, OMA and Howell to be featured in the report.

"WHAT'S HAPPENING" WITH OMA

By *Carolyn Kemmeries*

The Marshall Foundation, in collaboration with **University Merchants Association**, **University of Arizona Student Activities Board**, and the **Women's Resource Center** will stage an Arts Festival and "Battle of the Bands" Event on **April 1st, 2004 from 6 to 10 PM**. The collaborators have named the OMA Project as the beneficiary of all monies raised. Two stages and numerous activities will cover Park and University Boulevard for an evening of fun and celebration. **Mark your calendars!**

During the week of May 24 – May 28, Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) Fine Arts Department and Tucson Art Connection (TAC), an arm of *UApresents*, will provide a professional development opportunity to 200 area teachers. The Fine Arts Summer Institute (FASI), held on the University of Arizona campus and at TUSD school sites, provides hands-on experience for the arts-integrated, interdisciplinary model.

OMA will offer a four-day professional development program, (Artist/Teacher Training), for current and potential OMA artists and TUSD classroom teachers. It will be held from 8:00 – 1:30 from June 1 – June 4 at the U of A School of Music and Dance.

Booth-Fickett Embraces OMA at Sixth Grade

By *Brian Lambert*

As a sixth grade teacher at Booth-Fickett, I've been privileged to be a part of the OMA Project. My students have benefited tremendously, and I have had a wonderful opportunity to grow as an individual and educator through this innovative collaboration.

My classes have participated in the OMA project for the last two years. During this time, Rick Wamer, an incredible theater and mime artist, has inspired students and staff with his talents as a performer and a teacher. Rick works in all language arts classes and guides students through the creative writing process using the elements of drama and theater.

After each class, Rick and I work together to brainstorm ideas on how to improve the lessons, and to process what worked well and why. For me the OMA project is an example of team teaching that expands far beyond the boundaries of the traditional classroom through its carefully planned integration of arts and the core academic curriculum.

It has been rewarding to observe students as they grasp concepts that are being presented in a new style. It is gratifying to see their confidence grow along with their skills. The ideas and methods the OMA teacher presents provide extensions that are easy to incorporate into the classroom on a daily basis. This makes each lesson richer and more relevant to my students.

A LYNN/URQUIDES TEACHER

LAUDS OMA

By *Catherine Intranuovo*

"Without music, life is a journey through a desert."

--Pat Conroy

Living in Arizona, many of us can relate to a journey through the desert. Unfortunately, many of our children cannot relate to the wonderful world of music and art that extends far beyond television. Thankfully, students here at Lynn/Urquides have the opportunity to have their eyes, ears, hearts and souls exposed to this wonderful world. None of this would be possible without OMA.

OMA has positively affected my students and me in numerous ways. Through the magical work of Mrs. Michelle Sigafus, I have witnessed thirty-four fourth graders become increasingly proficient at the violin, by no means an easy instrument to master. They are able to count time, identify names of notes, and manipulate the strings to create music. Through her expertise, we are able to relate the music to our every day class work, such as our math objectives or our reading skills of the week. As the kids have said, music allows them to "relax" and "open their minds."

We all look forward to our music time – a time when we are one hundred percent engaged, motivated, and focused on our goal. As one of my students wrote in his persuasive essay, losing OMA would be like "losing a chunk of our lives." As these words imply, the impact that OMA has made on our students is simply immeasurable.

WEST ED RESULTS NO SURPRISE TO CORBETT TEACHERS

By *Rachael Nelson*

General Music Specialist, Corbett Elementary

The positive findings by West Ed in the year-two OMA study are no surprise to classroom teachers at Corbett Elementary. Debbie Pettit, 4th grade teacher, comments, "Research is showing that OMA is helping students academically, but I was already sold. Music is great for the human soul and it is wonderful to see music in the lives of our youth again."

Teachers here have many theories about why OMA is effective. All agree that there is tremendous enthusiasm among students for OMA. Fourth grade violin students "eagerly participate and are thrilled to have a chance to perform on stage." Several noted that OMA builds self-confidence in students. Pettit states, "OMA provides an avenue of success for students who don't always shine." Sandra Payton, a Kindergarten teacher, adds, "Even quiet students are happy to verbalize and participate in the OMA experience."

OMA utilizes whole-brain learning theories by making connections between academic subjects and the arts. Second grade teacher, Debbie Thomas, observes, "OMA addresses different learning styles for those who have difficulty learning in traditional ways." Payton adds, "Concepts are presented in multiple ways, so if students aren't catching on through my teaching methods, they have an additional learning opportunity."

Teachers at Corbett say they now incorporate the arts into other parts of the curriculum, and plan activities that include a wider range of learning styles. Evelyn Fretz, 1st grade teacher, says, "If we profess 'No Child Left Behind,' we certainly know the value of OMA. In OMA, we teach children through multi-sensory integration. It would be a real tragedy in education if we let OMA slip away."

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2025 E. Winsett, Tucson, AZ 85719

You will be sent a receipt acknowledging your donation.

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Tucson Unified School District
2025 East Winsett
Tucson, Arizona 85719**

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In order to receive a tax-credit, **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.