

Carrie Power
Fine Arts Chair, Grants Manager
East Aiken School of the Arts

My name is Carrie Power and I am the visual art teacher, grants manager, and fine arts chair at East Aiken School of the Arts. I have taught at East Aiken for the past twenty-five years and during that time I was responsible for starting the strategic arts planning process and building many of our arts programs both during the school day and after school. Over the past ten years, I have witnessed the transformation of a school that was struggling with below average test scores to becoming one of the top three schools in South Carolina for making progress on PASS this year.

East Aiken School of the Arts is a Title I school serving a student population of 73.62% on free or reduced priced meals. Our school depends on the grant funding it receives from the South Carolina Arts Commission, the State Department of Education, and generous community donations to make it possible to expand and improve the arts programs we can offer our students. I believe our school would not be the strong, innovative school you see today if it were not for the continued support of the Arts Commission and the State Department of Education over the past ten years. These two resources have provided the seed money to build quality comprehensive arts programs and give our students opportunities in the arts that we would not have been able to do without their support. There just aren't enough local school district funds to provide for these innovative arts opportunities we wanted to give our students.

The strong school we have today happened over a ten-year period. Within the first five years of implementing arts integration and having an arts focus we saw teacher moral go up dramatically to 100% on the teacher report card survey, student enrollment went up by 17%, and discipline referrals to our behavior management room went down dramatically. This meant teachers were happy in the workplace. It also meant students were engaged and spent more time on task in the classroom. A struggling school was beginning to stabilize. Our enrollment went from 489 students in 2008 to our current enrollment of almost 600 students.

Recording this type of action research became an important part of providing the proof we needed to show that expanded arts programming was not only changing the ecology of the school but also increasing student achievement. Research conducted by the University of South Carolina, Office of Program Evaluation found that schools with quality, comprehensive and sequential arts programs greatly changed the ecology of the school. The changes we were seeing at East Aiken School of the Arts were in line with this research.

We believe the arts are contributing to closing the achievement gap, giving students who live in poverty experiences to draw from opportunities they would not normally have. Poverty denies young people equal time, resources, and exposure to discover their

interests and foster their passions. It is not enough to focus on just the core subjects- we must use the arts to engage our students and create the problem solvers of the future.

At an arts integrated school, traditional academic teachers collaborate with arts teachers to plan and develop lessons that foster creativity and innovation. Students study the core subjects but are asked to apply what they learn through an art form. Teachers use the arts to not only engage their students in the learning process but as a vehicle to apply what they have learned.

Test scores at East Aiken School of the Arts reflect the positive impact the arts have had on student achievement. We believe the factors that contributed to our double digit gains on PASS and becoming one of the top three schools in South Carolina for making progress on PASS this year were: data-driven instructional strategies, benchmark testing, writing across the curriculum, and arts integration strategies used throughout the school curriculum. We believe strong arts programs are a real solution for closing the achievement gap and fostering skills needed in the workplace.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony on how the arts are making a difference in the lives of our children.

Sincerely,

Carrie Ann Power
East Aiken School of the Arts

Current (PASS) Test Score Results Released on August 5th, 2014

East Aiken School of the Arts

Writing

Third Grade: 19.8% gain in writing (the state average was a 7.8% gain)

Fourth Grade: 17.1% gains in writing (the state average was a 2.7% gain)

Fifth Grade: 11.3% gain in writing (the state average was a 6.3% gain)

Math

Third Grade: 18.8% gain in math (the state average was a 1.8% gain)

Fourth Grade: 8.1% gain in math (the state average was a -4.4%)

*When these fourth grade students were in third grade, this group scored 46% - met or exceeded the state standards in math,(these same kids) in fourth grade showed a **32 point gain in math with 78.4%** of these students who met or exceeded the state standards in math!!

Fifth Grade: 15.1% gain in math (the state average was a -0.8%)

Our third through fifth grade African American sub group scored 24.1% gains in math!!

ELA

Third Grade: 7.7% gain in ELA (the state average was a -4%)

Fourth Grade: No gains but the state average was a -2.4%

Fifth Grade: -0.1% gains but the state average was a -1.9%

Social Studies

Third Grade: 9.6% gain in social studies (the state average was a -2.6%)

89.6% of our third grade students met or exceeded the state standards in social studies!

Fourth Grade: 3.3% gains in social studies (the state average was 1.9% gains)

Fifth Grade: 7.3% gains in social studies (the state average was .3% gains)