



June 5, 2013

# Press Release

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## ***The arts are alive, well, and a major component of the learning experience at Riverview School District!***

In fact, did you know that...

- RSD student art work is displayed year-round in art shows, in each building and at the Central Office?
- During the 2012-2013 school year, there were 101 students enrolled in High School Band (compared with the 2007-2008 band which had just 48 students) with 117 students on the field at events?
- There are established district-wide requirements for weekly instruction in physical education for students in K-12<sup>th</sup> grade?
- Art students regularly reflect upon and write about their work?
- Orchestra, Band, and Jazz Band perform at more than 40 evening/weekend events per year?
- Mandatory health classes meet in 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades?
- A RSD student won a photography contest this year and will have that work published?
- During the 2012-2013 school year, close to 60 students were enrolled in High School Orchestra, with that number projected to increase to 70 for next year?

The district's commitment to integrating the arts into all facets of learning was exemplified during the past school year when the school board authorized the administration to accept an invitation to participate in southwestern Pennsylvania's AEC (Arts Education Collaborative) after teachers in K-12 art, music and physical education were chosen to participate in the AEC's Arts Programming Self-Assessment. The AEC's mission to strengthen education by making the arts central to learning through collaboration, research and advocacy is supported by the Heinz Endowments, the Grable Foundation, the Fine Foundation and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

As part of the assessment process, teachers reviewed district arts programming with the goal of determining the current status of these programs and developing a long-range plan for improvement. The self-assessment focused on professional development for music teachers, health/physical education teachers, and visual arts teachers under the direction of Lynn Black, Director of Student Achievement, AEC Director Dr. Sarah Tambucci, AEC Associate Director Jamie Kasper, and Project Manager Kathleen Dean who coordinated all aspects of the study.

The proposal for the self-assessment process identified nine areas for program review:

- Standards-based curriculum
- Instruction
- Student Assessment
- Professional Development
- Program Administration and Personnel
- Partnerships and Collaborations
- Funding
- Resources and Facilities
- Program Evaluation

To study each of the focus groups the AEC conducted teacher/administrator/counselor interviews, student and parent focus groups, document analysis, facilities reviews, observations and discussions. In addition, teachers participated in professional development with Attack Theater and the Carnegie Museum of Art.

During the process, students were asked about the “other kinds of things” they learn when they are in their music, art, or physical education classes. Some of their responses included:

- **How to express yourself**
- **Relationship building**
- **Cooperation**
- **Leadership**
- **Adapting to change**
- **Passion, initiative**
- **Confidence in yourself**

Commendations noted in the April 29<sup>th</sup> self-assessment report include the district’s identification of music, health/physical education and art as priority content areas, the desire and willingness of the faculty to prioritize needs and develop an action plan, teacher commitment and expertise, the existence of board-approved visual art and music curriculum, district provision of facilities dedicated to learning in music, health/physical education and visual art as well as adequate materials, equipment and resources to support student learning.

Among the recommendations for continual improvement are revisiting the existing curriculum to ensure that spiraling and sequenced learning opportunities exist across all grade levels, continuing to provide opportunities for common work sessions to facilitate K-12 collegial dialogue, focusing on embedded assessment with the goal of improving student learning, considering Advanced Placement courses in the arts, implementing dance/movement as part of the K-12 physical education program, ensuring that parents/guardians have multiple ways to monitor student achievement and using Pittsburgh’s vast cultural resources to enrich and extend learning opportunities for students, teachers and administrators.

District Superintendent Dr. Margaret DiNinno commented that several of these suggestions have been incorporated into 2013-2014 district programming, citing adoption of two new secondary courses: a physical education/dance course and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning courses which focus on the integration of core academic subjects and the arts.

In a May 20<sup>th</sup> overview presentation to the Board of School Directors, Riverview’s music, health/physical education and visual arts teachers thanked the district for continuing to support the arts during these challenging financial times and vowed to continue to strive for excellence in arts’ instruction.

**As a result of their involvement in the program one teacher indicated that “This process has helped me to have a deep understanding of my role as an individual and a team member, and how to express the importance of what I do.” Another indicated that “Working together and sharing ideas and data about the significance of the arts and its validity within core curriculum instruction and beyond is so important.” Perhaps the consensus of all involved can be summed up by another teacher who said, “This can’t be the end—we have to share this with our peers.” The group did just that when they shared their experiences with the entire Riverview staff during a Professional Development Day on April 29<sup>th</sup>.**