

Mississippi

*Mississippi Arts Commission
Kim Whitt, Arts Education Director*

General Information

Organization Mission Statement

The Mississippi Arts Commission (MAC) acts as a catalyst for the arts in Mississippi. By supporting and celebrating Mississippi's creative spirit, MAC is able to carry out its core values of objectivity, transparency, organizational integrity, collaboration and professionalism in sustaining its constituents.

Arts Education Mission Statement

The goal of the Arts Commission's Arts Education Program is to promote education in and through the arts as an essential component of the learning experience for Mississippi students by promoting sequential, comprehensive arts education in grades preK-12. The agency focuses on the belief that an arts education is a basic right of all children.

The Whole Schools Initiative (WSI) goals form the overarching goals for all arts education efforts at the Commission and help to focus its work. They are: 1) to improve student academic achievement through the integration of the arts into the basic curriculum; (2) to enrich the lives of students by increasing their skills and knowledge in all arts disciplines; (3) to assist the professional and personal growth of teachers and administrators through arts experiences; (4) to use the arts to increase parental and community involvement in schools; and (5) to assist schools in building a sustainable system for supporting arts infusion.

Arts Education Program Overview

To ensure that the arts are basic to the education of preK-12 children, MAC offers the Project Grant, the Arts in the Classroom Grant, the Whole Schools Initiative (www.mswholeschools.org) and professional development training through the WSI Summer Institute. MAC partners with the Mississippi Department of Education on School Improvement plans using the WSI model and to develop lifelong learners and 21st century work-force skills. To expand opportunities to participate in the arts and increase skills and understanding in the arts for children and youth, MAC offers several special initiatives: LinkUp!, a statewide orchestral education initiative; Moving toward the Art of Good Health, a ballroom dance pilot program; Museum on Wheels, a visual arts exhibit on the elements of visual art through classical and Mississippi artworks; and Poetry Out Loud. Through the Mini Grant and Artist Roster listing, schools and arts organizations can request funds to present artists, support a consultancy or assist with travel to an arts conference. To provide professional development opportunities for artists, arts professionals and educators, MAC provides off-site training opportunities at the WSI Summer Institute and fall and spring retreats specifically for Arts in the Classroom and Whole Schools Initiative grantees but available to anyone.

The Whole Schools Initiative is a nationally recognized, comprehensive school reform program that uses the arts as its primary vehicle. The initiative focuses on encouraging schools to place the arts at the forefront of students' learning experiences through a variety of activities. Schools participating in WSI are supported through grant funds, professional development, and technical assistance for up to six years. The program requires the inclusion of two components in each project: the use of arts teachers and visiting artists to strengthen the role of the arts as a core academic subject; and the integration of the arts in all academic subjects to increase student success.

Arts in the Classroom (AIC) (www.arts.state.ms.us/grants/ArtsintheClassroom.php) is an initiative created in response to the 2004 evaluation of the Whole Schools Initiative (www.mswholeschools.org/research/the-arts-are-an-r-too). The evaluation, conducted by a team of national education researchers over a five-year period, noted that while many schools are interested in participating in WSI, not all of them are ready to take on the challenging work that comes with the initiative. AIC is designed to provide schools with the fundamentals in arts integration that will help them to be successful if they choose to apply for WSI. AIC provides professional development in the fundamentals of arts integration techniques for teachers and administrators of preK-12 schools.

The Project Grant provides support for innovative arts education projects. The funds may be used for a variety of projects that develop and sustain meaningful arts programs for schools. Examples include bringing together artists and educators to develop integrated curricula, and preparing non-arts teachers to use the arts effectively and imaginatively in their classrooms.

Grant Programs

Types of Arts Education Grant Programs

- in-school arts education
- general operating support for arts education organizations
- arts education program/project support for arts organizations
- quick funds/minigrants
- other: Arts in the Classroom, professional development program for teachers and administrators in the foundations of arts integration and improved teaching practices

Groups Eligible for Grant Programs

- pre-K centers
- public schools
- private/nonparochial schools
- private/parochial schools
- regional/local arts agencies
- arts organizations
- non-arts organizations
- arts education alliance or similar statewide organization

Multiyear Grants

Multiyear grants are available for two years.

Total Number of Arts Education Grants Awarded in Most Recent Fiscal Year

72 grants

Total Dollar Value of Arts Education Grants Awarded in Most Recent Fiscal Year

\$ 200,750

Major Initiatives & Partnerships

Whole Schools Initiative

The Whole Schools Initiative is about comprehensive school reform using the arts. The program requires a strong six-year commitment from the school and district, and it is expected that the school and community will continue to support their Whole Schools project site after the six years is complete. Unlike the other grant categories, Whole Schools offers and requires a training component. The Initiative is open to elementary, middle and high schools. The goal of the Initiative is to educate every child in and through the arts. All members of the school community play an important role in the Initiative: the superintendent, the principal, arts and classroom teachers, students, parents, community organizations, local artists and businesses.

Communities LinkUp!

LinkUp! shares the educational expertise and resources of Carnegie Hall (New York) with arts organizations and school districts throughout the United States. Fourth and fifth graders engage in interdisciplinary classroom instruction to increase performing, creating and listening skills through a series of sequentially linked activities that include a culminating concert in the spring.

Moving toward the Art of Good Health

Elementary, middle and high school students from Bay Waveland School District receive ballroom dance and social etiquette instruction as a part of their comprehensive health education. This project is funded through a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation.

Museum on Wheels

Museum on Wheels is a traveling "lesson in visual art" that introduces audiences to the basic elements of visual art by providing simple definitions alongside classical and contemporary replicas by European, American and Mississippi artists. Accompanying the replicas are artists' biographies and lessons in the elements of visual art.

American Masterpieces

The Mississippi Arts Commission's first American Masterpieces project in fall 2007 focused on the works of musical genius William Grant Still, from Woodville. A series of concerts, featuring the Mississippi Symphony Orchestra, traveled to five venues across the state and featured the voices of seven choirs from Mississippi universities. Currently, a traveling exhibit highlighting the life and work of this exceptional musician is visiting venues across Mississippi.

Teaching Artist Training

The Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education partners to provide a series of trainings for teaching artists through funding from the Dana Foundation. This series continues, with information concerning how to participate found at www.msartsalliance.com/.

Funding for Arts Education Program from Sources Other Than NEA and State General Fund

Education Enhancement - tax revenue
Mississippi Department of Education - transfer money
Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation - private
Community Foundation - MAC arts education funds
Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration - other federal funds

Teaching Artist Roster Program

Teaching Artist Roster Basics:

- Out-of-state artists may apply for artist roster.
- A panel is used to select roster artists.
- Applications for roster are reviewed once per year.
- To retain eligibility, artists must reapply every three years.

Additional Comments on Teaching Artist Roster

Teaching artist reapplications must include documentation of professional development in the area of teaching artist.

Annual Events

Whole Schools Summer Institute

More than 350 teachers, administrators and artists gather at this annual week of professional development open to anyone interested in learning in, through and about the arts as well as how to integrate the arts into the total curriculum.

Whole Schools Institute Fall and Spring

One day twice a year for continuing research based professional development in arts integrated strategies and pure arts experiences.

Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts

The Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts are presented annually by the Mississippi Arts Commission and governor's office to recognize those whose work in the arts has significantly contributed to the growth and development of the cultural life of Mississippi.

Day At The Capitol

Each year, the Mississippi Arts Commission visits the capitol to thank the legislature for its support and to keep everyone in office abreast of arts events, activities and programs around the state.

Professional Development Services

Provision of Professional Development Trainings, Workshops and/or Institutes

- For classroom teachers, professional development is administered by the state arts agency office. The Whole Schools Institute is known and valued as the premier training ground for schools involved in education reform through the arts. The Institute's highly professional training models exemplary practice and gives educators the inspiration, knowledge and skills to lead their students toward the goal of reaching their full potential.
- For arts specialists, professional development is administered by the state arts agency office. Arts specialists are a part of the educators who participate in Whole Schools Institute training.

- For teaching artists, professional development is administered in partnership with another organization. MAC partners with the Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education, which provides the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts model for training artists to become teaching artists, and provides support and encouragement to apply for the MAC Teaching Artist Roster.
- For school administrators, professional development is administered by the state arts agency office. The WSI Summer Institute provides one-day training for school administrators.

Additional Comments on Professional Development Services

As a part of the ongoing professional development strategies in Mississippi schools, MAC works toward job-embedded forms of professional development. In addition, the agency provides professional development in the following areas: curriculum mapping, understanding by design, Mississippi Department of Education curriculum framer, multiple intelligence theory and depth of knowledge.

Poetry Out Loud

Poetry Out Loud Administration

- in-house with arts education staff
- in-house with contracted staff
- with partner organizations: MAC's current efforts involve developing statewide partnerships to serve as hosting venues, potential trainers or coaches at teacher and student workshops, and potential judges and training for judges. Potential areas of partnerships include but are not limited to community colleges, institutions of higher learning, arts councils and other arts organizations, junior auxiliary groups, Council of Teachers of English, Mississippi Theatre Association, Mississippi Department of Education, Mississippi Forensics League, Humanities Council and the literary artists of Mississippi.

Poetry Out Loud Participation

- number of schools participating in Poetry Out Loud statewide: 30
- Home-schooled students participate.
- Schools specifically for students with disabilities participate.
- Schools specifically for at-risk students participate.
- number of regional semifinals: three

Poetry Out Loud Resources and Activities

- documentation
- teaching artist training
- classroom teacher training
- workshops in conjunction with state finals

Additional Prizes and Awards

- MAC awards a plaque to the state champion and the runner-up. This year however, MAC expects to increase awards by asking for donations for participants in the regional semifinal rounds and state finals.
- Additional prizes were purchased.

Resources & Publications

Publications and Media Resources Provided:

- arts education handbook
- arts education planning guide
- statewide data/research on arts education in schools
- social networking, e.g., Twitter or Facebook
- video or audio CD
- streaming video or audio
- other: Whole Schools Initiative Web site at www.mswholeschools.org

MAC is in the beginning stages of its first major arts education state research and data profile, which will be published in partnership with Mississippi Public Broadcasting and the Mississippi Department of Education for publication.

MAC's Whole Schools Web site serves as a comprehensive site for those interested in arts integration strategies, trainings, resources and research in arts education.

Evaluation & Assessment

Assessment of Student Learning in the Arts

- Assessment training is provided. Training in the assessment of student learning in the arts is embedded in the training offered through the WSI Summer Institute.
- Sample assessment tools are provided. All materials of every session of WSI, including rubrics from every track, are published in the annual "Sessions Handouts from the WSI Summer Institute," with which every school is provided. For example:
 - curriculum mapping
 - thinking maps
 - museum as medium and learning on display
 - Ruby Paine's "Meeting Standards and Raising Test Scores"
 - studio thinking
 - understanding by design

Program Evaluation for Grantees

Evaluation tools and frameworks are provided for grantees. The Change Journey Process is one component of a continual planning and evaluation process. WSI schools are asked to commit to an organized session of reflection and discussion led by the field advisor or designee. The session results in a visual representation of the school's involvement in WSI that is shared at the Whole Schools Institute. The process usually begins as the school prepares to submit a grant application for future funding and continues through the preparation of the final report. The school leadership and the field advisor determine when the initial planning session is held and how it is organized.

Methods of Self-Evaluation of State Arts Agency's Arts Education Program

- formal external evaluation
- quantitative and qualitative grants data
- participation data
- financial data
- performance measurements
- surveys and feedback forms
- interviews
- focus groups and town hall meetings
- direct observations

Utilization of Evaluation

The work of the Whole Schools Initiative is evaluated at both the local and state level. The individual sites evaluate staff professional development and student art experiences as well as progress toward their goals. The Mississippi Arts Commission evaluates retreats and the Whole Schools Institute. Through staff planning, the commission also evaluates the progress of the initiative toward its stated goals. The grant application process and final reports provide avenues for evaluation of the work. Additionally, a team of national consultants has conducted a five-year study of the initiative available as .pdf downloads: <http://www.mswholeschools.org/research/the-arts-are-an-r-too>.

Arts Education Staffing & Network Contacts

State Department of Education Arts Curriculum Specialist

Limeul Eubanks

State Alliance for Arts Education

Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education and MAC work hand-in-hand to secure the arts in the daily lives of Mississippians and partner to provide services and training to artists, teaching artists, educators and school administrators. They have joined with other arts education facilitators as the Arts Education Network, designed to unite the mission and vision for arts education in Mississippi.

Arts Education Program Staff, Job Title, FTE

- Kim Whitt, Arts Education Director, 1.0
- Judi Holifield, Whole Schools Director, 1.0

Arts Education Coordinator's Split Responsibilities

- other areas of work: teaching artist, visual artists, and craftsmen
- percent of time dedicated to arts education program: 85%

Staff Biographies

Kim Whitt administers grants and provides technical assistance to schools, visual artists and craftsmen. She presents and facilitates the Arts in the Classroom Program, which serves as the foundation in arts integration for the Whole Schools Initiative. From 1995-2005, she served as the project director for Model Whole School, Nora Davis Magnet School, where she also taught visual art, drama and dance. As a teacher/consultant for the Mississippi Arts Commission, Whitt has taught and designed arts integration professional development programs. Whitt holds a B.A. in cultural anthropology and dance from the University of Southern Mississippi, earned graduate credit from Arrowmont School of Crafts and Haystack School of Craft and Design, is certified to teach K-12 in visual and performing arts, and is a long-time fiber artist.

Judi Holifield has led the nationally recognized school reform model since 2002 and has represented the Whole Schools Initiative at national, state and local meetings and conferences. During her tenure, she has established partnerships with the Metropolitan Opera Guild's Creating Original Opera and with Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute Communities LinkUP! orchestra program. Prior to becoming director of the Whole Schools Initiative, Holifield was a field advisor for the Initiative and taught music at Nora Davis Magnet School, a Model Whole School site in Laurel, Mississippi. She has 25 years of experience teaching vocal music at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. She holds the Bachelor of Music Education degree from the University of Southern Mississippi; her graduate work is focused on issues of self-esteem in gifted and talented children.