



North Colonie BOE Presentation Showcase

A look at advocacy by two veteran teachers in a district north of Albany, New York

Anne Manzella, District Art Supervisor for North Colonie Central Schools, and Laura Duffy, a K-6 Art Teacher in the district at Boght Hills Elementary School, have collaborated on developing a comprehensive program of promotion and community awareness for their Art Program.

They showcased their strategies at a workshop for the 2014 NYSATA annual conference; their two perspectives enabled them to generate an approach for program promotion and high visibility through building and community events that advocate the critical place the Visual Arts has in preparing students for careers in the 21st century. Through a collaborative program, a consistent array of highly visible publicity efforts reinforces the importance of art and artistic achievement among students, faculty and parents.

Manzella is the Director of the Art Department in a system of over 5,400 students. North Colonie has an impressive art program - with Accelerated Studio Art in the 8th grade and a full range of 2D, 3D and digital course work including University In The High School offerings at the high school level. Duffy is at the other end of the teaching horizon - Boght Hills is one of six elementary schools in North Colonie, and Duffy sees close to 550 students in a six-day cycle. The North Colonie Art Department's mission statement recognizes four important areas: collaboration, creativity, communication and critical thinking. Establishing an approach that keeps department focus on these themes helped guide interactions by all art teachers in the classroom and with the administration, parents and citizen community.

Art teachers know why the arts are important: opportunities to exercise creativity, practice proficiency at visual learning, cultivate aptitudes for decision making, plus

The Future of Your Program

Laura Duffy and Anne Manzella

strengthen a wide range of learning skills - the ability to focus, develop fine motor skills, cultivate perseverance, and foster collaboration. This is why one of the goals of the Art Department at North Colonie is to help other subject area teachers and district stakeholders appreciate the arts for what they provide students.

First, within their staff, Laura and Anne capitalize on their district's annual observance of Music and Art for Youth Month, by facilitating a formal presentation to their Board of Education each spring with their Fine Arts Steering Committee. One of their most effective moves is this staging of a "demo" night for the Board of Education - bringing students from all levels of the art program together to work on their coursework for the board members to observe and ask questions about. Making the visual arts less passive, and more performance oriented, or "hot" as NYSATA veteran and past department supervisor, Roger Hyndman, likes to say. A comprehensive video presentation rounds out the program at the board meeting. Each year a theme is developed linked directly to overarching district goals, so the BOE is made aware how the Arts contribute to the student learning experience.

The phenomenal videos from the last three years are available on the [North Colonie website](#). As part of the North Colonie Fine Arts Steering Committee, Laura volunteered to be the designer of these videos. "My goal," she says "is not to protect our departments or beg for support. We already feel strongly that we have that support. Our goal with these videos is to highlight the learning that takes place in our music and art programs. We want others to see that our work does directly connect to 21st century skills and college readiness. Our departments are closely connected to the North Colonie mission statement, and it is important to showcase how, using real life examples." Visual art students are on hand from each level showing project development for a range of classes and electives, as well as music students performing at this board meeting each year.



BOE Presentation With Students



BOE Presentation With Students



Demo night at BOE Meeting

In addition, activities in the art classroom feature discussions about careers in the arts, guest speakers and visiting artists, and an increased emphasis on public display, in the hallways, district offices and local community (which they recommend be continuous after a foothold is established). They also endorse a growing trend among art teachers in the use of [Quick Response codes](#) (small square pixelated patterns that can be read with a SmartPhone) included in all displays - the QR code allows gallery visitors and artwork viewers a pathway to curricular contexts, along with personal statements by the student artists.

Fostering a relationship with the local town library, the department teams up every few years to bring the art department and its program to the larger district community. By including the entire K-12 department of working artist teachers in the district's eight schools, the exhibit highlights their dedication and professionalism as serious practitioners. Curriculum objectives and connections to Art and Common Core Standards are celebrated through teachers displays hanging along side their own work, supporting their lesson objectives. This exhibition theme serves to challenge the misperception of art education in today's schools: it is not the arts and crafts of generations gone by. The show elevates the public's understanding and appreciation of the role the arts play in the education of the total child.

They regularly bring successful graduates into the spotlight - highlighting alumni who have gone on to careers in the arts and who've achieved recognition after leaving school. Students from several years out regularly come back to share first hand experiences with their college programs and first job experiences in the industry of art and design.

In a focused attempt at communication with the faculty, Laura has also hosted after school art workshops for her classroom teacher colleagues. Run like a typical hour long art class, these workshops highlighted ELA and Math connections, specific art content, and of course practice of art skills. Teachers, other staff members and even the principal attend these sessions to get a better understanding of the rich content being taught in art class. Anne has collaborated with content area teachers from English and Social Studies to present at district workshop days on the importance of visual literacy, and the interdisciplinary opportunities that exist when considering visual language.

Anne and Laura also urge art teachers to build "art galleries outside the box" of normal or traditional venues. They want you to capitalize on your district's website, and urge full, current and timely postings of curricular highlights, showcases, unit projects and classroom activities. Along with that "official" web presence, they recommend teacher/artists maintain a personal website that showcases work professionally.

They urge their art-teaching colleagues to make full use of district publications, either in print or broadcast e-mail - keeping the secretary or publicity person who maintains building or district communications fully informed with press releases and they also suggest keeping a gallery of sample student work from each level updated on the district's webpage. Art teachers may find a valuable communication tool in the school-wide newsletter. Include within the



Student Working at BOE Meeting



Hands On Community Artwork for Veterans Day Celebration



Community art at the building level- playground beautifications

newsletter students who represent the school in art displays outside of school, or a simple update of what is going on in art class. In their district at North Colonie, art teachers are urged to enter students (and their own work) in appropriate competitions and shows that could feed into their promotional messages. Highlighting achievements is an obvious advocacy strategy - but they embed features about a grade level or course into the award and show announcements to make them richer and more informative.

Other ways the art department can succeed in exposing their programs strengths is through publications such as web and print calendars, the cover of phone directories, district art and literary publications, handouts or brochures as take aways at open house or PTA events, featuring student art in annual faculty and staff awards for years of service, and framing student art as permanent additions in the hallways of the schools.

“Increase your visibility” is Laura’s and Anne’s mantra. Through community connections, school installations and communications, vigorous and rigorous professional activities, and an eye for celebratory opportunities (that get press and visibility), art teachers need to be vigilant and proactive about their program. To the cynical and “unchurched”, we’re protecting our livelihood. To we believers, there is an internal conviction and passion that know what unique and powerful gifts our teaching brings to the children in our classroom, and how our students strengthen their own lives and enrich an outward ripple of communities.

Laura Duffy

“I grew up in Oswego where I received a top-notch fine arts education. In December, 2002, I graduated from The College of Saint Rose, confidently prepared to face the world and my future students. I began as an elementary art teacher at both Boght Hills School and Loudonville School in September 2003.”



Anne Mineau Manzella

“Born and raised in the Albany area and a product of a rich art program in my high school, I always knew there would be art and design in my future, even though I didn’t know exactly how. Following a four year degree majoring in art at Binghamton University, I went on to pursue my MST in Art Education at RIT in Rochester, graduating in 1994. Along the way I had rich experiences in student affairs, as a Resident Director (RIT) and Assistant Dean of students (Siena College). Upon returning to the art classroom, it was not long before I pursued my administrative certification. As a result, I am fortunate to have held for 13 years a position I love, where I work with students directly as a teacher, balanced with overall program administration to support a strong visual arts program for all students of the district.”

