



BIRMINGHAM
CITY SCHOOLS

BCS News & Notes

A newsletter for parents, students, staff and community

Aug. 27, 2010

District wins \$1.16 million arts grant

The Birmingham City School System will receive a \$1.16 million federal grant to fund arts programs in nine elementary and K-8 schools.

The district was one of 33 across the country that were selected from 200 that applied for Arts in Education Model Development and Dissemination Grants from the U.S. Department of Education. The four-year grant will fund the Straight A's: Arts Advance Academic Achievement program.

The district will work in partnership with the Cultural Alliance of Greater Birmingham, which launched the Artists As Educators initiative in 17 schools last school year with seed money from the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham. Artists As Educators brings professional artists into the classroom to integrate the arts into other core academic areas.

Straight A's will be implemented in fourth-grade classes at Avondale, Central Park, Council, Glen Iris, Hemphill, North Roebuck, Robinson and South Hampton elementary schools and Whatley K-8 School. All fourth-graders at those schools will participate.

Professional artists in the areas of theater, music, dance and visual arts will rotate through the schools.

The project team will work with UAB's Center for Educational Accountability to assess the impact of arts-integration academic partnerships between classroom teachers and teaching artists recruited by the Cultural Alliance on literacy and mathematics skills.

"Our leadership and our teachers are committed to working with community partners to explore new and dynamic approaches to educating our young people," said Superintendent Craig Witherspoon.

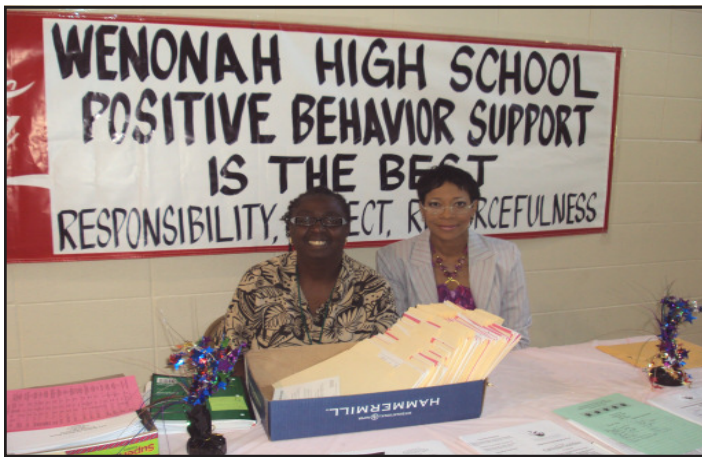
"The Cultural Alliance's Artists As Educators program gives Straight A's a firm foundation from which to work, and we're certain the variety of data gathered and analyzed by the Center for Educational Accountability will demonstrate locally what mounting national research tells us, which is an education in the arts increases students' critical-thinking skills and improves their academic achievement. We're extremely pleased that this U.S. Department of Education grant has recognized our early efforts and allowed us to move our program forward in a thoughtful, strategic fashion."



Constance Burnes, principal of Wilkerson Middle School, was in Montgomery Wednesday for a luncheon honoring schools that have been designated as Torchbearer Schools by the Alabama State Department of Education. Assistant Superintendent Rosalyn Childress, left, State Superintendent Joe Morton and Dr. Ethel Hall, a member of the Alabama State Board of Education who represents Birmingham, congratulated Mrs. Burnes. Torchbearer Schools are high-poverty, high-achieving schools. Wilkerson is one of only eight across the state and the only middle school on the list. It also was named a Torchbearer School in 2009.

"We are proud that our seed funding of Artists As Educators leveraged additional support from Birmingham City Schools and others for a phenomenal first year," said Kate Nielsen, president of the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham. "The announcement of this federal grant shows how we can build on proven success and transform the lives of even more students."

"Children learn most effectively in the same way adults do, through a hands-on engagement process that brings relevance to their lives, whether at work, school or home," Buddy Palmer, president and CEO of the Cultural Alliance of Greater Birmingham said. "And there is no more natural, stimulating and relevant approach to learning than through the arts."



Wenonah High School faculty members Eloise Crenshaw and Felecia Sanders welcomed parents who were interested in the Positive Behavior Support program.

Schools set Title I parent meetings

Wenonah High School held its annual Title I parent meeting in conjunction with a Supplemental Education Services provider fair Tuesday. Two sessions were scheduled at 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Principal Regina Carr-Hunter and Assistant Principal Genita Nolen gave parents information on all aspects of the Title I program, including school choice and school improvement. Other topics included understanding the school curriculum, how to contact school personnel and volunteer opportunities. Parents were able to get information on vendors who are approved to provide free tutoring for students.

Five other schools have similar programs scheduled. They are:

- Whatley K-8 School -- 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 1
- Robinson Elementary School -- 9 a.m., 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 2
- Jackson-Olin High School -- 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 7
- Carver High School -- 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 8
- Parker High School -- 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 9

-- Submitted by Ginny Carroll

Stories needed for newsletter

If you know of something good happening in the Birmingham City Schools and you want to tell others the news, write a few paragraphs for BCS News & Notes and e-mail the information to Michaelle Chapman, director of communications, at mchapman@bhamcityschools.org. Digital photos also are needed. Ms. Chapman is editor of "BCS News & Notes."

GATE teacher's unit featured

B.J. Melton, a teacher in the Gifted and Talented Enrichment program, got some unusual recognition recently. The Alabama State Department of Education asked him to develop a unit to be used by teachers in gifted and talented programs across the state. The unit is on a wiki page that is available to teachers.

Melton's unit is for fifth-graders and focuses on the economy through the lens of culture.

The unit allows students to figure out the "big ideas," rather than being told what they should get out of it. That allows them to learn concepts instead of just facts.

The economy unit teaches that needs and wants of a culture determine how resources are utilized, that choices have consequences, that traditions and personal perspectives affect the economic needs and course of society, that needs may affect consumption and that geography affects economic systems.

"The topic of the economy is too vague for most elementary school students. They do know that, when they have money, they can buy things they want," Melton said. "When students focus on their own and their families' habits of consumption, the many ideas and concepts that comprise the concept become clearer."

GATE is a district-wide program for third- through fifth-graders. Students go to GATE sites one day each week. Melton is based at Norwood Elementary School.

-- Submitted by Linda Taylor

Parents enjoy first workshop

The Davis Center was ablaze with parent activity Wednesday as the Family Involvement Program hosted its first district parent workshop entitled, "All the things you need to know about Birmingham City Schools". More than 125 parents and community leaders were in attendance as district personnel shared information about board policies, services, resources and federal laws affecting children. The goal was to give parents the tools to be proactive in their children's education.

A few of the comments made by parents were:

"I have been given so much information and resources I did not know about. Helps myself and my children." - Washington K-8 and Parker High parent

"It was a great way to start the school year." -- Robinson Elementary parent

"I truly have learned from this experience and look forward to the next workshop." -- Councill Elementary parent

"The workshop was very helpful and needed. I will continue to work with the schools." -- Lee Elementary and Wilkerson Middle parent

"This was my first time attending one of these meetings and I totally enjoyed it." -- Wenonah K-8 parent

-- Submitted by Mechelle Rice-Fields