

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)**



Public Roundtable
on
“Arts and Humanities Initiatives in DC Public and Charter Schools”

Testimony of
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Before the
Committee on Education
Chairman David Grosso

Council of the District of Columbia
Room 120
John A. Wilson Building
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Good morning, Chairman Grosso, members of the Committee, and staff. I am Corinne Colgan, Chief of Teaching and Learning with the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). We appreciate your interest in the state of arts education and humanities initiatives at DCPS, and I am grateful to have the opportunity to share the work we have done thus far.

DCPS Arts programming works to ensure every student has access to joyful and diverse learning opportunities through artistic expression. I am proud to serve a school district that recognizes the impact of a quality arts education. DCPS supports the arts by promoting innovative instructional programs, ensuring high-quality professional development for teachers, and proactive community building between schools and local organizations. This approach creates opportunities for students to apply their educational experiences in a world-class city that values creativity and appreciates the arts.

DCPS Arts Curriculum

DCPS focuses on empowering students to be confident, expressive, and solutions-oriented thinkers who can create art through a range of outlets. Our arts education program aligns with our goal of educating the Whole Child, and provides a framework for our young people to develop creative capacity as well as self-advocacy skills, such as self-awareness and communication. Through our arts curriculum, based in the *Framework for Arts Learning* (included in appendix), students gain the technical skills needed for postsecondary success.

At the elementary level, students explore various forms of media, materials, and tools while building a foundational understanding of artistic concepts. In middle school, students begin to develop their production skills in tandem with their critical analysis of art history. In high school, students engage in hands-on curriculum that supports diverse learners as well as resources for those interested in pursuing the arts as a career.

In all that we do, we strive to ensure all DCPS students reach their full potential through holistic and engaging learning experiences. Our nationally aligned arts curriculum encompasses dance, music, theater, visual, and digital arts.

- Through **music**, students engage with improvisation, presentation, movement, performance, and composition skills. While students explore their voice, our music curriculum teaches the technical skills students need to read and write music. DC Keys is a cornerstone lesson that provides students the opportunity to perform, compose, and improvise their own music through keyboard instruments. Through creative composition and improvisation techniques, DC Keys encourages students to use instruments as an extension of their own voice.
- In the **visual arts**, students explore their ideas and feelings through 2D and 3D art forms, including digital art forms. While the students develop their craftsmanship and design skills, they also develop their identity and place in the world.

Students in each grade are offered a variety of arts instruction across the district, and students have the opportunity to create, perform, showcase, and connect their work to a range of





artistic disciplines. Our goal is to build critical thinkers, develop expressive artists, and inspire creative human beings.

Key Initiatives

DCPS pairs our arts curriculum with the work of our community partners. Ultimately, we recognize high-quality art in schools is cultivated through our partnerships with the local community. DCPS coordinates with partners to enhance the artistic experiences of students, and our teachers as well. As a district rooted in excellence and equity, it is important that our art educators receive professional learning opportunities that allow them to best serve the needs of their students. As an example, the Ace fellowship is a cohort of teachers chosen to develop trauma-informed skills that are then retaught to arts teachers. DCPS is proud to partner with world renowned arts organizations, including the Smithsonian Institutions, the Washington Performing Arts, Imagination Stage, the Kennedy Center, and the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

Finally, we host a variety of annual events for our students to exhibit their artistic abilities to the larger Washington D.C. community. The DCPS Arts team is committed to helping students express themselves in the community. The following events and curriculum give students opportunities starting in Pre-K to think about their community and what it means to be a DC resident. These include:

- ***The Elementary Art Show***, an annual event where the district provides an exhibit of teacher chosen elementary art at the Sumner School Museum.
- ***Build Day DC***, an interactive event where kindergarten through second grade students study their community through an urban planning lens. Students are taught to recreate their ideal community through building large structures onto a 400 square foot canvas map of the city.
- ***Everyday DC*** allows sixth to eight grade students to study how their community is seen by non-residents. Students are given the ability to use their photographic and journalism skills to capture the neighborhood they know and love through their own lens. Student photos are then displayed in the Pepco Edison Place Gallery and celebrated during an opening night hosted and curated by the students themselves.
- ***Transform DC***, a high school program where students look at what it means to be a DC resident and create public murals to represent their emotions. The murals are displayed outside of the Garnet-Patterson school building.
- The DCPS ***Honors Ensemble***, features individually selected vocal and instrumental students from schools across the district. Students learn and perform together for a final performance, which features student and teacher composed music in the theme of I am DC.
- The ***Performing Arts Festival***, a city-wide event where students from all wards perform on the Millennium Stages at the Kennedy Center through vocal, instrumental, dance, and theatrical performances. Students have the opportunity to learn from professional artists on a world-renowned stage and showcase what they developed in their performance classes.





To provide students with unique and enriching opportunities, the DCPS Arts team collaborates with many community partners across the district through school-based and out-of-school programming. I want to thank our partners across the arts for their continued support to DCPS students. These events and the many other initiatives that happen at DCPS schools would not be possible without our partners and the larger arts community.

Conclusion

I would like to thank Mayor Bowser and the DC Council for investing in and valuing our city's next generation of creative leaders. DCPS is committed to carrying on the rich culture of arts in our city through high-quality arts education programming. I appreciate having the opportunity to share updates highlighting the amazing work of the students and teachers who uplift the voice of the art community every day. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



Appendix I: Framework for Art Learning at DCPS

