

**Elk Plain School of Choice**  
Nomination Questions - Question #1

In 1992, Elk Plain School of Choice opened its doors as a school “emphasizing The Arts and Sciences.” Through economic challenges, changes in educational practices, and even paradigm shifts concerning *how to* best teach the arts, the staff at our school has remained steadfast regarding one thing: **The Arts are an essential component to every child’s education.**

Through stimulating classes and hands-on experiences, Elk Plain School of Choice students discover the power and potential of the arts, and engage in exciting personal explorations of their own creativity, uncovering their innate talents and strengths. Rather than designing an entire program around a single arts modality, students are exposed to all The Arts: dance, theater, music, and the visual arts. This emphasis, with its dynamic interdisciplinary and critical pedagogy approaches, creates a rich learning environment. “The Arts for art’s sake” is clearly identifiable at Elk Plain School of Choice, as we have a certificated teacher/specialist in each of the four arts areas; each specialist is highly qualified, experienced and possess strong backgrounds in their art form. All Arts classes are taught **during the school day**, including dance, general music, band, choir, theatre and visual art. After school arts programs are also offered in orchestra, visual art, and photography.

	Dance	Music	Theatre	Visual Art
Number Employed Full-Time		1	1	
Number Employed Part-Time	1 (.8 FTE)	1 Orchestra		1 (.8 FTE)

Each student participates in two trimesters of each art form, with 50 or 55-minute periods between one and three times a week. All students, kindergarten through sixth grade, participate in these classes, as their regular, required classes - not electives. For the performing arts, one of the two trimesters is spent creating an integrated performance, and the other trimester is spent skill building and creatively responding within the art form. By giving importance to each art form in and of itself, and then assessing students in each of the four areas using Washington State’s CBPA’s, Elk Plain School of Choice complies with national and state legislation that states that The Arts are core, mandatory, and basic education.

In addition, classroom teachers regularly infuse dance, music, theatre and visual art into student learning. For example, our fourth grade teacher and visual art teacher recently collaborated on a large Jacob Lawrence project. Our second and third grade classes are working on a play entitled *Grammarasuarus*, in which they sing, dance, and act as they learn and tell about grammar, punctuation and dinosaurs. Arts integration flows the other way as well. Our dance teacher has students choreograph dances that represent the changing states of water, integrating science and dance. In one recent learning experience, fifth grade students created works of art and dance pieces honoring the work of visual artists Jonathon Green, and exploring aspects of black history.

## **Elk Plain School of Choice**

### **Nomination Questions - Question #2**

Over the years Elk Plain School of Choice educators have participated in extensive professional development designed to provide instruction for creatively integrating The Arts with core curriculum. One program that many educators have participated in is the Arts Impact program. Arts Impact educates and empowers teachers to incorporate art into their students' basic education through an intense two-year program that emphasizes hands-on learning through one-on-one community artist/teacher mentorships. While working closely with a community artist, teachers become competent, confident leaders of standards-based arts lessons, and they learn to infuse the arts into the core classroom curriculum; this improves student learning across the curriculum and allows students to creatively express themselves.

To facilitate arts education Elk Plain School of Choice has a dance studio, a keyboarding room (for piano instruction), a vocals room (for singing instruction), a dedicated Theatre space with sound & lighting systems, a stage, and risers. Because visual art is integrated easily into the classroom our Visual Art instructor works within each teacher's room, but also has a stocked supply room, a photography development room, and a kiln room.

Creative teaching incorporating The Arts is typical in each and every classroom. In one instance a first grade teacher taught the fundamentals of symmetry (math), with her artist mentor, through portraiture. The children, with a partner, had to use descriptive language they had learned in reading, writing, math & science; to guide their partner's drawing of each of their own facial elements. The drawing partner was not allowed to draw their own face by memory; they had to rely on their partner's description. By using descriptive language (size, location, etc) the student artists began to discover that faces were "the same on both sides!" By applying their discoveries in portraiture to geometric shapes, symmetry was mastered in a way that was meaningful to each student, and portraiture was mastered at their level!

One of our Second & Third grade teaching teams, typical of the type of integration done at Elk Plain School of Choice, worked with their students to create an entire performance based on their in-class study of Flat Stanley by Jeff Brown. Flat Stanley was utilized in all aspects of their core curriculum, for example, in their Social Studies work the children sent Flat Stanley all over the world, for this they incorporated letter writing, map skills and general communication skills. As the Flat Stanley performance was created the children utilized their in-class experiences to enhance all aspects of it. The children incorporated their writing into the script, their creativity into the dances they helped create, and even worked collaboratively on the set decorations and props. By using core curriculum to inspire the children's artistic endeavors the team ensures comprehensive and sequential learning of required curriculum **AND** The Arts.

Another typical example of The Arts integrated creatively comes from a second grade reading group. The group read a Russian folk tale entitled The Snow Child. After group discussions of the literature and personal response writing, the students created dances to show their interpretation of relationships they found in the story. The individual dances were performed, with time being given for discussion tied to the story and audience feedback.

A well-loved experience each spring is our fifth grade Site Specific Dances. Students, after choosing a small group to work with, go out onto the campus and express their connections to

the environment using elements of dance, space, time, and energy. The students work collaboratively to incorporate the site with their choreography; they are responsible for creation of 100% of the dance. Students have danced at the flagpole, on top of a picnic table, around the garden, and on the big toy, using their choreographic and group collaborative skills. This is a favorite experience for many of our volunteers as well, as each group has an adult that watches and manages without interfering with the creative process.

This year our 5<sup>th</sup> Grade classes integrated a study of artist Jacob Lawrence with a Social Studies unit about Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK). The MLK unit focused on all aspects of his life from childhood to death. At the same time they studied Jacob Lawrence's life and the influences that helped shape his art. Through class discussions and personal writing the children began to see parallels in the types of influences both men had; one politically & religiously, the other socially and artistically. As a tribute to both great men the children each chose an aspect of MLK's life to memorialize. They took their understanding of Jacob Lawrence's life and stark/vivid work and layered it with MLK's life to create writings and visual art that expressed their feelings and understandings of tolerance, acceptance, and peace. The artwork was completed in the Jacob Lawrence style with deep bold colors, strong characters, vivid colors and at times a surrealistic perspective. The children wrote pieces to accompany the artwork, giving their interpretation of the event in Martin Luther King Jr.'s life they memorialized and it's broader meaning to children across the world. The artwork and written pieces were so well done that Tacoma's Broadway Center for the Performing Arts has utilized both the artwork and written pieces as integral parts of their Teacher's Instructor's Guide for their work entitled *11 Days in the Life of Dr. King*.

## **Elk Plain School of Choice**

### **Nomination Questions - Question #3**

At Elk Plain School of Choice parental involvement is a normal part of our day-to-day activities. Kindergarten parents volunteer a minimum of 6 hours per month, with all other parents committing to fifteen hours or more each school year. One program that parents enjoy being part of is “*Creative Corners!*” This program allows parents and community members to come in to the school during the school day and teach small groups of children an art, craft, or skill. Our volunteers often choose to teach an art form that is integral to whom they are... choosing to pass on the passion and enjoyment it brings to their lives. Over several days the children are offered a ‘menu’ of art experiences to choose from. We deliberately keep the groups very small to ensure quality time with the new art form & volunteer instructor, and to encourage a depth of choice by students. Examples of art forms that have been offered include crocheting, photography, African drumming, calligraphy, video editing, beading, and card making.

During a Dance and Theatre lesson called “*Creating meaning through the senses*”, students experience flavors, sounds, smells and textures from other world regions. Parent volunteers participate in this experience by providing safety and enjoyment. They help blindfolded students from one station to another, guiding the experience safely, avoiding fear or unpleasantness while students listen to a Latin American market place, smell incense and world spices, taste Ethiopian bread and sauces, Mexican Dulce de Leche, play a variety of percussion instruments from all over the world, or dance to catchy music from other cultures. Students begin to understand other cultures, to learn from journeys to other lands through the senses. Students also use their sensory experience to enrich a play, create a dance or movement skit.

Another integral form of parent involvement at Elk Plain School of Choice is through Friends of the Arts (FOTA). FOTA was established by a group of parents as a non-profit way of focusing parent participation in The Arts. Over the years parents, with FOTA’s facilitation, have developed an annual auction of donated items intended to fund The Arts. Parents donate items to auction, staff the auction, work the food and beverage booths, and review grant requests for the earned funds. Another FOTA facilitated event is a pasta dinner. Parent volunteers cook, our FOTA sponsored Dance Ensemble serves, and past students perform. FOTA also video records every grade-level performance and sells them to families. Funds raised by FOTA have been used to maintain arts equipment (such as the kiln, speakers), and purchase of Chimes, a wireless microphone system, and materials for the Visual Art program. The funds have also been used to pay for substitutes so our Specialists can attend artistic performances with classes.

Parents are also an essential part of our grade-level performances, as well. Parents are integral parts of costuming, prop gathering and building, set design and painting, and rehearsals. They work closely with small groups of children to complete designs inspired (or created by) the students. One of our recent parent-guided props was a Trojan horse for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade performance of *The Trojan Horse*. The horse, standing about 6 feet tall, actually concealed 6 student-warriors as it wheeled it’s way into the city!

## **Elk Plain School of Choice**

### **Nomination Questions - Question #4**

As most artists and educators know instinctively, the arts provide the most natural and organic platform for allowing students to experience and process elements from other cultures. In *Stormboy*, second and third graders put on a multi-dimensional art performance: a folktale, dance, music and art performance for our entire student body, K-6. They studied the native cultures that lived in our region long ago and designed their own t-shirts featuring original native petroglyph designs. They painted Native Salish images using natural pigments, which were then projected on a screen behind them as they performed the story. They accompanied their acting and dancing with instruments they made themselves. The sounds were created to depict nature: tubes were used to create whale sounds, drums conveyed the rhythm of the world and the heart beats of nature, while stiff plastic and aluminum sheets were used to make thunder, wind and water. They also made masks and choreographed dances to share what they learned about the First People of our region.

The fourth and fifth graders studied the world-famous black artist Jacob Lawrence. Jacob Lawrence taught in Seattle, WA and after meeting him, our visual art teacher felt it was important for the students to learn about his work. After viewing Lawrence's story paintings about Harriet Tubman, they illustrated a series of drawings about a normal school day, using his style. They then wrote African Praise poetry to accompany their illustrations. Their drawings and writing was presented to the school board. A book containing their work was published and sold in their class. As word spread in the larger community they were asked by the Broadway Center for the Performing Arts to illustrate a play they would be performing in local schools called the Eleven Days of Martin Luther King. Their illustrations were put into the teaching manual the Broadway Center distributed to all the schools in which the play was performed.

With a script based on the African tale of *Mufarro's Beautiful Daughters*, students experimented with African-inspired movements and then choreographed dances to help illustrate the story. Parents and educators from other schools brought in artifacts from recent trips to Africa, including baskets, rugs, clothing, dishes and tools, and we were granted permission to use these items as props and set for our play. Students created their own drum composition, after learning some basic African rhythms.

In dance, students of all ages learn traditional folk sequences; recent examples include the Sweets of May, (England), the Polka (Poland), tap (African/Irish roots), cha-cha (Latin America), hip-hop (African-American) and an Israeli circle dance.

In theatre, our Ecuadorian theatre specialist creates a wide variety of cultural learning activities on a regular basis. Students participate in improvisational activities, such as creating market scenes after listening to authentic world-wide market sounds, and then pantomiming the opening of a purchase or special package. The students imagine what country they are in, and then have to use their acting skills to show cultural details from that land.

**Elk Plain School of Choice**  
**Nomination Questions - Question #5**

Elk Plain School of Choice works in partnership with the Broadway Center for Performing Arts Education and the Kennedy Center's Partners in Education Program. We bring in teaching artists with their after-school Broadway Conservatory, and our students are offered the opportunity to rehearse dance and musical theatre, and then perform in the neighboring urban area.

Our dance teacher has formed a partnership with the University of Washington Dance Program, and each spring, accompanies students up to Seattle to spend a day amongst the dance majors, taking ballet and modern technique classes, touring Meany theatre and participating in choreographic exchanges.

Our art teacher regularly submits student work for district-wide, community events and display opportunities. She has worked with our students to illustrate and then publish books of student artwork. Our students feel empowered by this real life and meaningful connection between their own art and the interested art-viewing community! Recently a professional company came to perform an assembly honoring the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and it was our students' art that illustrated the teacher study guide.

Our theatre teacher has strong connections to the Seattle performing community and regularly works to secure funding for performing companies and individuals to perform and do workshops here at Elk Plain School of Choice. In recent years, we've had Christian Swenson (actor/dancer), BQ Danza (her own company), the Broadway Center for Performing Arts (such as Rose Cano giving an MLK presentation), Mark Kistler (3-D graphic artist), Jeffrey Braverman (photographer), Vivaci! (award-winning choral group), The Hamstead Company (which has performed Shakespeare and *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*), Northwest Dance Company, Cedar and Salmon (Salish and First People artistic/cultural experiences) and various authors/illustrators.

Elk Plain Friends of the Arts produces an annual *Platter of Pasta and Performances*, in which students perform dance, music and/or theatrical selections, and then serve dinner to the attendees. In this rural/suburban area, the arts events that Elk Plain School of Choice offers the community can be very meaningful for some families. Friends of the Arts also facilitates the Chocolate, Chimes and Cheers evening, annually, with as many as 350 of our students performing at some point in the evening, and the community members enjoying treats and browsing through beautiful hand-crafted items donated by local residents, EPSOC families, and local companies.

Fifth grade students participated in a grade-level performance entitled *Hurricane Katrina*, an original work, shortly after the tragedy in New Orleans. They acted out the story, including the fear, loss, and unity experienced in the disaster. The students choreographed their own hurricane dance, among others. Experiencing the arts in real-world, meaningful projects that connect them to their greater community, is part of the vision here at Elk Plain School of Choice.

One way our parent and community members get involved in creative practices is through our after-school program. One visual art class, Art Around the World has had numerous visiting artists share their crafts. We've had visiting visual artists from Oaxaca, Nigeria, the Puyallup Tribe, and the Skokomish tribe. We have also hosted a local glass fusion artist, a quilling expert, and a weaver.

**Elk Plain School of Choice**  
**Nomination Questions - Question #6**

Elk Plain School of Choice has a student count of 442 (February 1, 2011).

**Gender (October 2009)**

Male 223 48.3%  
 Female 239 51.7%

**Race/Ethnicity (October 2009)**

American Indian/Alaskan Native	14	3.0%
Asian	33	7.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	33	7.1%
Black	56	12.1%
Hispanic	34	7.4%
White	325	70.3%

**Special Programs**

Free or Reduced-Price Meals (May 2010)	102	22.3%
Special Education (May 2010)	41	9.0%
Transitional Bilingual (May 2010)	0	0.0%
Migrant (May 2010)	0	0.0%
Section 504 (May 2010)	1	0.2%
Foster Care (May 2010)	1	0.2%

**Other Information (more info)**

Unexcused Absence Rate (2009-10)	0.05%
----------------------------------	-------

**Teacher Information (2009-10) (more info)**

Classroom Teachers 27  
 Average Years of Teacher Experience 10  
 Teachers with at least a Master's Degree 88.9%  
 Total number of teachers who teach core academic classes 24  
 Total number of core academic classes 24  
 NCLB Highly Qualified Teacher Information  
 % of classes taught by teachers meeting NCLB highly qualified (HQ) definition 100.0%

The following table demonstrates Elk Plain School of Choice, Measurement of Student Progress (Washington State Standardized Test) results in reading and math from spring 2010:

2009-10 Washington MSP Results:

Grade Level	Reading WA	Reading EP	Math WA	Math EP
3rd Grade	72.1%	77.9% (+5.8%)	61.8%	82.4% (+20.6%)
4th Grade	67.2%	72.3% (+5.1%)	53.7%	64.6% (+10.9%)
6th Grade	64.6%	73.3% (+8.7%)	51.9%	68.3% (+16.4%)