



THE ARTS PART OF THE SOLUTION

STUDENTS STANDING TALL

Schools Transformed by the Arts



Hemmed in by the cold, gray landscape of the city, the three-story brick Indianola Elementary School is a fixture in the Clintonville neighborhood of Columbus. Generations of students have worn the sharp edges off the stone steps leading up to the main entrance, but when you walk through the front door, you enter a different world. Bright paintings line the hall and the sound of music echoes down the stairs. Surprises are waiting around every corner.

Indianola has a curriculum that is designed to engage students in active, real-life learning experiences, and the arts are viewed as an integral part of the education of every student. It was that commitment to the arts

that led dance specialist Marlene Robbins to apply for an Ohio Arts Council Artist-in-Residence grant with Bill Wade and the Inlet Dance Theatre. Wade and another company member spent four weeks working with students. The final performance, with a cast of more than 200 students, attracted community-wide attention and earned a standing ovation. But the residency was much more than an exploration of the arts. “It was not about furthering the art of dance through people,” Inlet Founder and Artistic Director Bill Wade said. “It was about furthering people through dance.”

The development of 21st century work skills was at the center of the residency process. Choreographing, rehearsing and performing dance is a way to activate the kind of skills students need to recognize as important for success in life—from critical thinking and creative problem solving to meeting deadlines to focusing intensely to giving and receiving feedback to working with and respecting others.

Research by the Dana Foundation shows tight correlations between music training and sequence learning, acting and memory improvement and dance and observational learning. While researchers are still working to prove the link between the practice of the arts and cognition, the teachers and students at Indianola know that arts programs like the residency by Inlet Dance Theatre are making a difference. “The residency energized the community. The school was filled with joy and inspiration, and when the students took their bow at the performance, they all stood a lot taller,” said Robbins. It is a lesson they will carry for the rest of their lives.



21st Century Education

Creativity and Imagination

FRANKLIN COUNTY
Indianaola Elementary
School
Columbus, Ohio



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Bill Wade, Founder and Artistic Director, Inlet Dance Theatre