25 CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS PARTICIPATE IN ART INSTITUTE PROJECT TO ENHANCE STUDENTS’ THINKING SKILLS

The Art Institute of Chicago is pleased to announce the 25 teachers from 17 Chicago elementary schools who are participating in an innovative collaboration between the Art Institute of Chicago and the Chicago Public Schools called TEAM: Thinking Experiences in the Art Museum. Funded by a $1 million gift to the Art Institute from Cari and Michael J. Sacks, the program is designed to empower CPS 4th- and 5th-grade classroom teachers and their students to use thinking skills in conjunction with works of art in both the classroom and the museum.

The multi-year TEAM project is a visual literacy program centered on the belief that intensive, engaging experiences with original works of art catalyze skills that foster critical and creative thinking. These thinking skills can be applied in turn to core subjects including language arts, social studies, math, and science. CPS teachers participate in 90 hours of professional development at the Art Institute during their two-year participation in the program. By placing teachers in the position of learners first, museum educators help them to become aware of and use their own thinking processes. In turn, increased awareness of their thinking processes empowers teachers to teach both the thinking skills and the awareness of how and when to use these skills with their students.

"Museums provide an essential resource for cultural learning in a community and have become critical partners in the K-12 educational landscape," said Douglas Druick, President and Eloise W. Martin Director of the Art Institute. “We believe that interacting with artworks can have a significant impact on young lives, and we are committed to diligently measuring that impact and using what we learn to improve the program."
“The TEAM collaboration between Chicago Public Schools and the Art Institute will expand access to arts education for Chicago’s teachers and students,” Mayor Rahm Emanuel said. “This partnership complements the City of Chicago’s comprehensive arts education plan, leveraging one of our city’s world-class, civically engaged cultural institutions while opening new possibilities for our children.”

“Through our first-ever arts education plan, a comprehensive strategy is now in place to ensure access for all students from preschool through high school graduation to visual arts, music, dance and drama,” said CPS CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett. “The TEAM project will help elevate the arts as a core subject and support teachers as they deliver instruction that will foster students’ creativity, innovation, critical-thinking and communication skills.”

In year one, museum educators visit TEAM classrooms multiple times and work directly with the 4th and 5th graders, introducing and practicing the use of thinking skills through engagement with reproductions of works of art from the museum’s collection. Teachers then receive follow-up emails with ideas for transferring the strategies used in studying the works of art to core subjects such as math, language arts, science, and social studies. Each teacher’s students also visit the museum twice per school year for TEAM tours led by specially trained Art Institute docents who use authentic works of art to reinforce the thinking skills that were introduced and practiced in the classroom.

In year two, teachers continue with professional development, museum educators continue to teach in classrooms, and students again visit the Art Institute working with docents to reinforce using the thinking skills using authentic works of art. In their second year, however, teachers take on more responsibility for incorporating the thinking skills into their core curriculum, as their continuing use of the tools and training provided by TEAM educators is expected to foster further increases in critical and creative thinking by both teachers and students. After their participation in TEAM, teachers then become resources for their colleagues by sharing TEAM teaching strategies. TEAM thinking skills will be further disseminated through an online platform.

The 25 CPS 4th- and 5th-grade teachers from 17 CPS elementary schools represent 10 of 13 CPS networks, covering 77% of Chicago. Nearly all of the TEAM schools have a Creative Schools Ranking of 3 (“developing”) or 4 (“emerging”). The students are representative of average economic
demographics for all of CPS.

TEAM: Thinking Experiences in the Art Museum
2014-2016 Roster: 17 schools, 25 teachers

1. Phillip D Armour Elementary School
   - Melissa Neff-Alamillo
   - Julissa Lopez
   - Rafael Rinconeno

2. Alice L Barnard Computer Math & Science Center
   - Pilar LaFaye

3. Myra Bradwell Communications Arts & Sciences Elementary School
   - Kelsey Sohrweide

4. Rachel Carson Elementary School
   - Kelly Pertzborn

5. Chicago Academy Elementary School
   - Susan Stone
   - Benjamin Value

6. Frederic Chopin Elementary School
   - Lauren Caffarella
   - Rosa Maria Marquez

7. Henry Clay Elementary School
   - Deborah Spain

8. Henry R Clissold Elementary School
   - Joné Arsenault

9. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Academy of Social Justice
   - Jamila Ellis

10. Everett McKinley Dirksen Elementary School
    - Christina Gangi
    - Barry Norton

11. Erie Elementary Charter School
    - Lupita Ramirez

12. Washington Irving Elementary School
    - Heather Dunn
13. Helen Peirce International Studies
   - Haneefa Muhammad

14. Ambrose Plamondon Elementary School
   - Jacqueline Doyle

15. Rueben Salazar Elementary Bilingual Center
   - Lesley Escobar

16. William H Seward Communication Arts Academy
   - Robert Fabian
   - Jamie Samson

17. George B Swift Elementary Specialty School
   - Cheetara Hudson
   - Julie Onuoha
   - Sucharitha Rao

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