

**OCDSB Advisory Committee on the Arts 2009-2010
Year-End Report, 15 June 2010**

Submitted by ACA Chair, Katherine Stauble

“When arts education takes the place in our society that it deserves, we will have much less delinquency and violence, and much more motivation towards noble achievement. My struggle is for a society in which art is more than just an aesthetic dimension of life. It is a primary instrument for the development of the individual and of the people.”
(Gustavo Dudamel, conductor, 2009):

Established over 20 years ago, the OCDSB Advisory Committee on the Arts has as its principle mandate to support and encourage arts education for all students, and to provide a liaison among educators, members of the community and arts organizations.

1. ACA Meetings and Membership

Over the 2009-2010 school year, ACA meetings were held at Fisher Park School Staff Room, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm on the fourth Monday of each month. At the first meeting, held September 21, 2009, the committee elected Chair Katherine Stauble, Vice-Chair Debbie Holzman, and Secretary Kelly Abercrombie.

The ACA has at its core a group of people who are extremely committed to arts education and to the work of this committee. Several are longstanding ACA members. Not only does such commitment illustrate the depth of feeling in the community about the value of arts education, but it also provides the group with significant organizational memory.

This year, average attendance for monthly meetings was 12 people. The following were members of this year’s committee:

Voting Members

Arts Community, Government

Kelly Abercrombie and alternative representatives, National Arts Centre
Audrey Churgin/Wendy Hartley, MASC
Natasha Harwood, Ottawa Little Theatre
Ashley Judd, Ottawa International Children’s Festival
Amanda Lewis, Ottawa School of Speech and Drama
Nancy Burgoyne, City of Ottawa, Community Arts Program

Parents/Community Members

Heather Flinn
Jim Hardy

Debbie Holzman
Jim McNabb
Lisa Nash
Katherine Stauble
Lillian Thomsen, OCASC
Trina Whitehurst, OCASC alternate
Wendy Sewell

Post-secondary institution

Michael Wilson, professor, University of Ottawa Faculty of Education

Non-Voting Members

OCDSB Staff & Trustees

Susan Daugherty, teacher, Adult HS/Visual Arts Subject Council
Peter Gamwell, Superintendent
Jennifer McKenzie, Trustee, Zone 10
Karen McNeil-Barclay, teacher, Sir Robert Borden/ Visual Arts Subject Council
John Shea, Trustee, Zone 8 (alternative)
Greg Wysynski, Instructional Coach in the Arts, Curriculum Services

Lifetime Community Members

Judy Kirsh

2. ACA Activities

A. OCDSB Arts Recognition Awards

The OCDSB Arts Recognition Awards are presented annually to individuals, groups or organizations, and for special projects and events, in recognition of outstanding service in the area of arts education. Nominees include OCDSB teaching staff and community members.

Each year, the ACA works hard to give these dedicated educators and volunteers the recognition they deserve. It organizes a ceremony before Education Committee, and sends a media release to OCDSB Communications staff. Student musicians provide entertainment before the ceremony, and a reception is held afterwards.

The 2008-2009 Awards Ceremony took place in the presence of trustees and senior staff at the OCDSB headquarters on October 20, 2009. Award recipients were:

Staff Awards

- Elementary Music, Intermediate: Gerard Michael Loehr (Sir Winston Churchill P.S.)
- Secondary Drama: Iona Henkelman (A.Y. Jackson)
- Secondary Literary Arts: Dr. Joan Strong (Merivale H.S.)

- Secondary Media Arts: Scott Hughes (Merivale H.S.)
- Secondary Music: Jason Sinkus (Gloucester H.S.)
- Leadership in the Arts Award: Irv Osterer (Merivale H.S.)
- Marjorie Loughrey Lifetime Achievement Award: Monique Lacombe (Barrhaven)

School and Community Awards

- Community Arts Award, Huong Nguyen (Merivale H.S.)
- Secondary School Event, *A Few Good Men* (A.Y.Jackson S.S.)

B. Arts in the Community Directory

The ACA updated its Arts in the Community directory of enrichment opportunities for Ottawa schools. This includes student programs at many of the city's museums, theatres and concert halls, as well as artist-in-residence programs through organizations such as MASC and the Ontario Arts Council. The directory is posted online on the OCDSB website, under "Students Corner," and on the ACA website, acaottawa.ca.

C. The Amazing ACA Art Show

For the second year, the ACA offered presentations to district school councils in an effort to raise awareness among parents of the importance of arts education, and to encourage parental involvement. Committee representatives showed a Power Point presentation and distributed a handout, including the Arts in the Community directory, and brochures from a number of the region's arts organizations.

The response at the schools visited was very positive; parents demonstrated a genuine commitment to school arts programs and eagerness to lend their support. They were particularly appreciative of the handouts we distributed, which included practical ideas for parents, from electing an arts representative on school council, to fundraising for materials and visiting artists, to writing newsletter articles that celebrate student art work.

Although the focus of attention of these "dog and pony shows" has been elementary schools, the group also made presentations at Merivale High School, at Jennifer McKenzie's zone meeting, at an OCASC meeting and at four University of Ottawa Faculty of Education classes.

After two years, the ACA feels its school visits have become an important part of its work and plans to continue them. The committee will continue enlarging its scope; it hopes to visit more high schools next year and present to trustees and principals.

D. Communications

In an attempt to improve communications with its community of parents, teachers, artists and other associates, the ACA launched its own website at www.acaottawa.ca. The website includes information about ACA meetings, a history of the ACA, the How Parents Can Help list, the Arts in the Community directory, information on funding and awards, success stories, links and resources. Members of the Education Committee are encouraged to visit the site and to submit additional material, including stories of exemplary arts programs in OCDSB schools.

The ACA will continue to provide updates to the OCDSB Communications department for its internal website. However, it hopes to further strengthen communications activities by collaborating with Communications staff to develop a Communications Strategy for 2010-2011. In particular, staff could help to publicize Culture Days activities (see below) and the Arts Recognition Awards.

E. Guests

The ACA welcomed a number of guest speakers at this year's meetings: Gail Valentine of the Director's Cut, an organization that brings multimedia arts workshops to schools; Véronique Couillard of the Ottawa Art Gallery, who gave a presentation on the OAG's programs for schools and its Exhibition Connection website; and Jane Smith and Nathan Toft, the OCDSB teachers who created Portable Radio Kids. All these presentations were extremely well received. ACA added their programs to the Arts in the Community directory and website.

F. CTV/NAC Artists-of-the-Month

The ACA helped staff at the NAC prepare a proposal for an Artist-of-the-Month program to be piloted by CTV. For this program, teachers throughout the region would be invited to nominate their top arts students to be featured on a CTV segment. OCDSB Director Lyall Thomson lent his approval to the initiative in a signed letter.

G. Relationship-building at the OCDSB

The ACA made it a priority in 2009-2010 to strengthen relationships with other advisory committees. It has established a good relationship with OCASC and the Parent Involvement Committee through Chair Anne Teutsch, and hopes to collaborate with other committees in future.

H. Support for funding

In the fall of 2009, ACA Chair Katherine Stauble founded the Raisin Artists fund to support visual arts workshops in OCDSB elementary schools. Although this is not an ACA project, a number of ACA members have lent their support to the initiative by contributing to fundraising or sitting on the selection jury. Although the fund was unsuccessful in its request for a Community Foundation of Ottawa grant, it was able to raise \$1200 through fruitcake and granola sales. In its first competition, Raisin Artists awarded two OCDSB schools with a free full-day visual arts workshop.

Similarly, the Marjorie Loughrey Award, though not an ACA initiative, engages ACA members in its selection committee. This year's jury selected two elementary schools to receive one-week arts workshops. It is of note that Marjorie Loughrey was a pre-eminent trustee with the former Ottawa Board of Education, and a formidable advocate for arts education.

The ACA provides information on these two funding opportunities on its website, and publicizes them during school council presentations.

I. Ontario Elementary Arts Curriculum

The ACA took a strong interest in the new elementary arts curriculum and invited OCDSB Arts Instructional Coach Greg Wysynski to give a presentation on the document. With its very practical approach, this document has the potential to become an important pedagogical resource for generalist arts teachers.

J. Culture Days

In preparation for the nation-wide celebration of the arts, Culture Days, to be held from September 24 to 26, 2010, the ACA is planning a public event that will showcase OCDSB arts classes. It plans to present a show in a downtown location (possibly City Hall) on Friday, September 24. The committee has already invited OCDSB elementary schools to submit works of art on video, to be screened on site in a continuous loop. Members will soon approach several secondary schools to provide student groups for live performances during the day.

Because Culture Days takes place so early in the year, the committee is faced with the challenge of mobilizing teachers and their students when arts programs are not fully up and running. It hopes to solve that problem by collecting the recorded submissions from elementary schools before the end of this school year, and by engaging well established performance groups from the secondary panel for the live portion.

OCDSB administrative staff can contribute to this project and help showcase students both through communications support (web site postings, media relations, etc.) and through attendance at the event on September 24.

3. Arts Education Strengths and Concerns

The ACA is very pleased with certain recent developments in arts programming at the OCDSB. Notably, the new Time Allocation Model, arts evaluation guidelines, instructional coach model and quarterly teachers' meetings are sure to strengthen programs. In addition, committee members are constantly thrilled with the quality of arts instruction that many gifted OCDSB teachers are providing, and the exceptional learning experiences they give their students. These exemplary practices are in full evidence each year at the Arts Recognition Awards ceremony, at the Cappies Gala, and at many festivals and showcases in between.

However, there are a number of ongoing concerns that are frequently raised in meetings and in our discussions with parents around the region. The following are among the most pressing needs:

- a formal arts program review or monitoring, with quantitative and qualitative data collection;
- an OCDSB arts policy;
- an OCDSB budget line for the arts, or recommended school budgets;
- more consistent arts programs across the region, without cuts to exemplary programs;
- more specialized teacher training (training for generalists, retention and hiring of specialists);
- equitable recognition and value for all four arts disciplines;
- encouragement for students to take arts courses in Grades 10-12.

4. Instructional Coach in the Arts

The ACA welcomed the new Instructional Coach in the Arts, Greg Wysynski, who has made a very positive contribution to the committee and has clearly done an excellent job at the Board. With the new Board focus on one-on-one coaching, Greg provides invaluable support to generalist teachers. Among his many duties this year, Greg helped to organize numerous workshops, showcases and festivals, as well as the Cappies program. He collaborated with the Catholic board and MASC to organize the annual LiterARTcy event and Arts Incentive Day for teachers. The Instructional Coach in the Arts continues to play a vital role in the delivery of arts programs at the OCDSB.

5. Arts Organizations

The ACA has enjoyed the continued participation of representatives from the city's arts organizations. These individuals have been able to communicate important information to the ACA about educational programs and activities such as museum tours, workshops and student matinées, as well as professional development opportunities for teachers. The following are some highlights:

8. 2010-2011: Strategic Priorities

In an effort to support excellent arts education for all OCDSB students, the ACA is committed to a number of **annual** activities, including the following:

- Arts Recognition Awards;
- Arts in the Community directory: updating listings;
- ACA presentations to school councils and other groups;
- monitoring of Board and Ministry developments;
- website updates and improvements (OCDSB and ACA websites);
- recruitment of new members, including representatives of subject councils, business community, administration; appointing of arts discipline representatives;
- strengthening connections with Education Committee, trustees, OCDSB Communications, advisory committees.

The following are **new** priorities and initiatives under consideration for the coming year:

- Culture Days showcase of OCDSB arts activities;
- communications strategy, in collaboration with OCDSB Communications staff;
- support for OCDSB dance programs, elementary and secondary;
- promotion of Aboriginal arts;
- promotion of arts field trips;
- partnership with embassies to invite visiting artists into schools.

9. 2010-2011 Meeting Schedule

The ACA will hold its meetings at Fisher Park School Staff Room, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm on approximately the fourth Monday of each month, that is the following dates: September 27, October 25, November 22, January 24, February 28, March 28, May 2, May 30.

10. Acknowledgements

A number of ACA members stepped up to the plate this year to make substantial contributions to our activities. Special thanks go to the following individuals: Kelly Abercrombie for being secretary; Heather Flinn, Judy Kirsh, Jim McNabb and Michael Wilson for their very considerable contribution to sub-committees; Jim Hardy, the behind-the-scenes webmaster; Debbie Holzman for added web support; Ashley Judd for being assistant secretary; Trina Whitehurst for refreshments; and Lisa Nash for Culture Days contribution. Thanks also to Cheryle Watson for her support in disseminating information to school councils, and to Jennifer Adams, Jennifer McKenzie and John Shea for their extra time in meetings.

11. Conclusion

The ACA is pleased with its accomplishments over the 2009-201 school year. It has strengthened relationships with a number of individuals and groups, raised awareness among parents of the vital role they can play in supporting arts education, and engaged some dynamic new members. The committee is particularly happy to have seen so many young people on school stages, in audiences, and in classrooms, pushing their creative boundaries, challenging their minds and finding joy in the arts.

- A person who's in the theatre group has the right to the same swagger as every kid who plays hockey. (Max Keeping, Cappies Gala, June 2009)