



ENHANCING EDUCATION THROUGH

ART

Involvement in Art Education is associated with gains in mathematics, reading, critical thinking and empathy. Rite of Passage prepares its students for the 21st century through experiences that require them to “think outside the box.”

El Centro Youth Create Church Mural Using the Power of Imagination

The youth of El Centro’s Evening Learning Center and Mentoring and Tracking program are giving back to the community through art. The hallways of El Centro’s First Baptist Church have a new—and unexpected—upgrade: they all feature underwater scenes painted (freehand) by the at-risk youth in these programs.

First Baptist Church Pastor, Tommy Rogers, asked the El Centro youth to assist in his idea for a mural project in the church after attending a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the treatment room at the Evening Learning Center. Student artwork—called “iconic puzzle pieces”—decorated the treatment room walls. Pastor Rogers was so impressed with the quality of the work that he invited youth from the Evening Learning Center to paint murals in the hallways of the church.

The “Under the Sea” mural has been an on-going project for nearly three months. Other community entities have stepped in to provide lunch and other supplies to the youth who, through the power of their imaginations, are transforming the halls of the First Baptist Church into an underwater world.

The Qualifying Houses Celebrate Nevada as the “State of the Art” in the Nevada Day Parade

As the State of Nevada honored its vibrant culture of Arts and Entertainment for this year’s Nevada Day parade, the Rite of Passage Nevada and California Qualifying Houses honored—and resurrected—a near 20-year legacy of their participation in the parade.

With Nevada’s celebration of its own statehood as one of the largest in the country, Rite of Passage re-ignited its participa-

tion in the event with a student-and-staff made float that paid tribute to the diverse artistic accomplishments in the State of Nevada while reminding viewers that expressive art can have a profound and positive effect on the artists themselves.

Thousands of event participants watched as the giant music scale featuring Nevada's state song, giant paint palettes and paint brushes and a giant collage of art created by Nevada artists cruised down the main street of the state capital, reminding parade-goers that creative expression resides at the heart of Positive Youth Development—one of the ways Rite of Passage achieves our mission of improving the lives of youth, families and communities.

Breaking Down Barriers Through Art: Dramatic Art Impacts Arkansas Youth

The Arkansas Juvenile Assessment and Treatment Center (AJATC) is using an unusual intervention to kick-start students' academic success and recovery: art. Through an after school program that launched this fall, eligible students can participate in a program focused on the dramatic arts.

"These kids are remarkable, and the art accentuates that," said AJATC Principal, Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield.

AJATC hosts a total of nine after school clubs, and the drama club, led by Dr. Wall-Whitfield, challenges students to produce monologues and two-person plays. Wall-Whitfield, who taught drama for ten years prior to becoming an administrator, uses brainstorming sessions and constructive criticism to help students get to the heart of their stories.

Wall-Whitfield sees the benefits of creative programming as two-fold: "Art allows students to get their feelings out into the world. Instead of cutting herself, a girl can turn on music and dance. Or, instead of beating someone up, a young man can memorize lines to a monologue that captures his anger and the reasons behind it."

The other reason, she says, is more important: "So many of our students are behind in school. They struggle in math class. Then, they struggle in English. In these classes, they work so hard to understand. But, in theater it's about what is inside of you. You help them through the lines, then they memorize them. On the stage, they can take ownership of their hard work and accomplish something. But then, that pride and self-confidence is translated back into the classroom."

