

Evidence of Review Criteria:

Background and Context

List the names of the school board members and the number of terms or years they have served. Please be sure to indicate the length of a single term.

A single term is three years. The Schenectady School Board members include, Jeff P. Janiszewski, 3rd term, John F. Mitchell III, 2nd consecutive term, Linda Bellick, 3rd consecutive term, Maxine J. Brisport, first term, James R. Casino, 3rd term, Lisa Russo, 1st term, Warren R. Snyder, 5th term.

Describe the community in which your school district is located including information on the setting (urban vs. rural) and socio-economic profile.

With a city-wide poverty rate of 30.5% and an average elementary school free and reduced lunch rate of 68%, Schenectady is an urban school system with one of the highest poverty rates in New York State. The Schenectady City School District is experiencing increasing student enrollment and currently serves nearly 10,000 students in grades Pre-K to 12. The district is racially and ethnically diverse with a student body that is 31.3% Black; 13.6% Hispanic; 9.1% Asian/Indian; and 46.0 % White.

In addition to high rates of poverty, many of Schenectady's students face significant disadvantages. According to most recent Prevention Risk Indicator Services Monitoring System (PRISMS) data from the NYS Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services, Schenectady County has among the very highest youth risk indicators in New York State. These risk indicators are reflective of the conditions in the city of Schenectady, which is the urban core and has the largest population base in this small otherwise suburban county.

- The rate of Children in Foster Care is 77.3/10,000, significantly higher than the NYS average of 43.9/10,000.
- The rate of Child Protective Services Mandated Reports is 272.7/10,000, significantly higher than the NYS average of 192.1/10,000.
- The rate of Teen Pregnancy is 326.6/10,000, significantly higher than the NYS average of 223.6/10,000.
- The rate for total PINS Cases (Persons in Need of Supervision) is 346.8/10,000, is more than double the NYS average of 155/10,000.
- The rate of Youth Violent Crime Arrests is 57.5/10,000, compared to the NYS average of a rate of 35/10,000.

While academic achievement continues to improve, the goal of having every child achieving New York State Standards on statewide assessments still remains challenging. Based on the 2005/6 NYS Report Card data, 54% of third grade students and 39% of sixth grade students achieved NYS Standards on the ELA assessment, and 67% of third grade students and 35% of sixth grade students achieved NYS Standards on the Math assessment.

Given the community setting and profile, describe any pertinent challenges the school district has faced in developing and/or maintaining a comprehensive arts education program.

The pressure for academic achievement under the NCLB accountability system has been a huge challenge. While our schools and school board recognize the immeasurable value of the arts in a quality educational program, the accountability system under the No Child Left Behind Act does not. Schenectady's academic performance is typical or similar to other high poverty urban school systems. The pressure on teachers to raise test scores has been enormous. The fact that Schenectady continues to integrate arts into the academic curriculum and after school and enrichment programs, when many other districts have fallen into the trap of teaching to the test and measuring students only on their standardized test scores speaks volumes of the school board's commitment to the arts and to teaching the whole child.

District Data

How many students does the school district serve? Please provide a breakdown of the number of elementary, intermediate/middle, and secondary/ high schools in your district.

We have 9,998 students in our district, including 4,727 pre-K/elementary students, 2,244 middle school students, 2,919 high school students and 108 students which are home schooled.

How many full-time teachers are employed by the school district?

There are 830 full time teachers employed by the district.

How many part-time teachers are employed by the school district?

There are 10 part-time teachers employed by the school district.

Please indicate by arts discipline, how many are full-time and part-time arts teachers.

We have 32 full-time music teachers, and 3 part-time music teachers.

We have 2 full-time dance teachers.

We have one full-time theater/media arts teacher, three part-time theater/media arts teachers which are shared with other disciplines.

We have 27 full-time visual art teachers and two part-time visual art teachers.

How many visual and performing arts supervisors are employed by the school district?

There is one visual and performing arts supervisor employed by the school district, the titles are the Fine Arts Coordinator and House Principal designated to the John Sayles School of Fine Arts.

Please describe the distribution of the arts teachers among the schools in the district.

Distribution is based on student enrollment. In the teacher's contract, elementary art teachers teach 20 art classes a week, each class is one hour a week. Elementary music students meet for 30 minutes, twice a week and music teachers teach 41 classes a week, this includes choir in the elementary school. We have 11 band and instrumental teachers that service the elementary schools. In each of the middle schools there is a band, an orchestra and two general music teachers as well as one full time and one part time art teacher.

At the high school, enrollment and program interest have driven staffing increases over the past ten years. There are four music teachers assigned full time and two that are shared with other buildings. Each is a specialist in their own area including: a vocal/choral director; band director; orchestra director; piano specialist; and two general music teachers. There are two dance teachers and four theatre/media arts teachers. Nine visual art teachers teach that very popular arts program. At our alternative high school there is one full time art teacher.

Budget Information

What is the total annual budget for the school district?

The total District Budget for 2007-2008 is \$140,047,903.00.

What is the total instructional budget for the school district?

The total Instructional Budget for 2007-2008 is \$87,513,274.00.

What percentage of the total annual budget is spent on arts teachers' salaries and instructional materials and supplies? 5.09 %

How much is spent on arts teachers' salaries and instructional materials and supplies on a per pupil basis? \$713.01 per pupil

How is arts funding distributed among the schools?

Arts funding is distributed based on the size of the school, needs of the program, grade level as well as the number of students in that school.

Are there assistance programs for interested students who cannot afford arts fees such as instrument rental, laboratory fees, and supplies?

We put great effort into obtaining and maintaining district instruments for beginner students which are rented for \$35.00 for the school year, but students can also apply for a waiver, if there is a financial hardship. The rental fee is returned to the department to cover the cost of maintaining these instruments. To level the playing field for all students and encourage broad participation, we have no laboratory fees for any arts courses. We have funds set aside for competitions such as NYSSMA. The program is accessible to all students. This concept is paramount for the diversity of our socio-economic population. The National College Board requires slides from each AP Drawing candidate, students are required to pay for their own slides. We have a scholarship program in place for students in financial need. We also have assistance programs for the AP Drawing test through our guidance department.

Instructional Programs

Provide a list of arts courses, the grade levels in which they are offered, and the average number of students enrolled. Please indicate by (*) if these arts courses are required.

Fine Arts Course Offerings John Sayles School of Fine Arts – Grades 9-12, enrollment # follows

Dance

- Core Course – Introduction to Dance*- 109
- Ballet-16
- Jazz Dance-34
- Hip Hop-39
- Tap-44
- Dance Connection-15

Theatre/Media Arts

- Core Course – Introduction to Theatre*- 49
- Acting I- 45
- Video Production- 86
- Acting II- 25
- Filmmaking I- 24
- Electronic News Gathering- 17
- Perspectives on Air - 15
- Acting III - 6
- Acting IV- 4

Fine Arts

- Fine Arts Seminar (English 12 and Fine Arts Credit)- 22

Music

- Core Courses - Music in Our Lives*- 61
- Core Courses - Band*- 69
- Core Courses - Choir* - 95
- Core Courses - Women's Choir*-17
- Core Courses - Orchestra*- 55
- Core Courses - Piano I*- 93
- Core Courses - Rudiments*- 17
- Voice Seminar I - 15
- Piano II - 15
- Jazz Ensemble - 39
- Serenaders - 29
- Chamber Music - 9
- Drumming - 35
- Music Special Class - 26
- Wind Ensemble - 43
- Chamber Choir - 10
- Voice Seminar II - 4
- Piano III -17
- Piano IV - 8
- Voice Seminar III - 3
- IB Music -11

Visual Arts

- Core Course – Myths and Legends - 117
- Core Course - Studio in Art* - 287
- Intro to Drawing* -29
- Color and Design* -38
- Intro to Ceramics* -37
- Intro to Computer Art*-57
- Intro to Sculpture* -21
- Craft Design* -72
- Art Special Class – 33
- Drawing I -59
- Computer Art and Electronic Imaging I -40
- Drawing and Painting -23
- Ceramics I -21
- Sculpture I - 22
- Sculpture II - 2
- Visual Art Portfolio and Career Preparation
- Advanced Placement Drawing -16
- Computer Art II -15
- IB Visual Art - 7

Describe the distinguishing characteristics of any exemplary arts education (visual arts, dance, music, theater) programs that have been developed, and in what grade levels they are offered. Also indicate how many schools offer these programs.

The Schenectady City School District provides opportunities for all 10,000 of our students to participate and engage in the arts at a high level. Our students at the Pre-K level have the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of art and music through one hour a week of art and music taught by certified arts specialists. This continues for our Kindergartners that also receive one hour a week of art and music. The district and our community value these opportunities as part of our core academic program for our youngest students. With the opening of our Early Childhood Center, Fulton, meeting the needs of our youngest students will be one of the keys to their future success. Noteworthy is that this succeeds mandated programming. In an informal survey of programming of our surrounding districts, we are one of the few that provides these opportunities at the Pre-K level. We continue to offer high level arts opportunities in grades 1-6. Additional opportunities include four magnet schools in our district, Yates Arts in Education Magnet focuses on the arts. Two of our other magnets are rich in arts opportunities as they explore culture and international studies. Each of our magnet schools follow themes that often utilize the arts as a means of integrating curriculum.

Some instrumental lessons start in 3rd grade highlighting the recorder and we still do a 3rd gr. string program at Yates Arts in Education Magnet School. We start instrumental music at grade 4, with a string and band program. Piano keyboard labs exist at the middle schools. *Stories that Dance* is a program with Northeast Ballet and Dance Co. in conjunction with Proctors which we do each year with a different elementary school and there is at least one art residency in one elementary school each year. Another offered residency is for every 6th grader each year where dance, theatre, differentiated instruction and literacy are highlighted through improvisation.

As part of our budget, we offer Arts in Education money to each building to extend arts opportunities to classroom teachers.

We offer ballroom dancing classes to 5th and 6th grade students in after school programs in three elementary schools.

John Sayles School of Fine Arts

The Sayles School of Fine Arts (SSFA) functions as a school within a school at Schenectady High School. It integrates Regents high school coursework with an interdisciplinary focus in both the visual and performing arts. Its purpose is to provide a rigorous academic program with consistent opportunities for students to explore the fine arts for future academic, career, and personal enrichment. Students will have opportunities to participate from the beginning to the advanced level in a variety of fine arts courses. All courses are designed to strengthen students' arts and academic skills.

The mission of the Sayles School of Fine Arts is to be a multi-cultural collaboration of students, teachers, administrators, parents and the community that values students' artistic excellence and academic achievement. It is committed to artistic exploration and growth in alignment with the NYS Learning Standards.

The school is housed in a 42,000 square foot wing of Schenectady High School, built as an addition in 2001.

Since its 1998 debut, the Sayles School of Fine Arts Blue Roses Theatre Co. has put on more than 40 performances in its impressive 250-seat Black Box Theatre. From classics such as "A Raisin in the Sun" and "A School for Scandal" to a series of original short plays by SHS students, the plays continue every year.

The Sayles School of Fine Arts is one of the few schools statewide to offer dance. Students study jazz, tap, ballet, and Afro-Brazilian dance. Dance Connection is the school's performance troupe.

The Sayles School has two jazz bands, a wind ensemble, a full band and orchestra along with four select choirs, including a boy's choir.

The visual art curriculum offers a range of courses from Studio in Art to AP Drawing. The Henry and Miriam Butzel Gallery located in the Sayles wing, showcases students and community artwork during the year.

The Media Arts program at the Sayles School includes TV and video production, filmmaking, and news gathering. It is home to the SCSTV, the district's TV station on cable channel 17. During the 2006-07 school year students from the station produced a training video for Price Chopper Supermarkets and Zone 5 Law Enforcement Training Center.

Each summer since 2002, The SSFA offers a Summer Film Festival. This project, in cooperation with Proctors Theatre, offers students the opportunity to write, direct, edit, and star in their own films. The topics vary from documentaries to comical films. Students volunteer for this program and are not awarded any kind of course credit for their participation. Summer 2007 featured – *I'm Old* – a comical and tender look at life in a retirement home; *Under the Marquee* – a documentary film on the history of Proctor's Theatre; *Tales of a Bus Ride* – share the lives of three entertaining bus riders; and *Sidewalk* – focused on a street corner and the four streets that lead to this corner.

The Blue Roses Theatre Company

What's in a name? *Jim: ...Being different is nothing to be ashamed of. Because other people aren't such wonderful people. They're one hundred times one thousand. You're one times one! They walk all over the earth. You just stay here. They're as common as - weeds, but - you, well you're - Blue Roses!* from *The Glass Menagerie*, by Tennessee Williams

On October 21, 1998, The Blue Roses Theatre Company made its official debut with a performance of Williams' lyrical masterpiece *The Glass Menagerie*. As part of the Schenectady City School District's John Sayles School of Fine Arts, the BRTC continuously strives to present something unique and beautiful to its audiences in Schenectady's schools and the surrounding region as well. At the core of its mission lies the belief that students learn best while working side by side with artists of varied backgrounds and levels of experience. For this reason, Blue Roses incorporates the collaborative efforts of student and adult artists, from both within the school district and the regional artistic community at large, in every production it takes on. Accomplished performers, designers and technicians, often bringing years of professional credits with them, work with our students on every show. We at The Blue Roses Theatre Company hope to continue bringing something worthwhile, pleasing and perhaps just a bit out of the ordinary to theatre audiences in our community.

Describe the visual and performing arts professional development opportunities that are offered to classroom teachers and arts specialists.

In addition to professional development days offered throughout the school year, Schenectady mandates a 30 hour professional development requirement for all teachers in the district. The 30 hour professional development requirement must be outside of the school day. Our arts staff has also risen to the challenge of offering diverse arts opportunities for other teachers in our district. Some of these include an arts course for the "non-artist", another course is Collaborative Working Artists Professional Development: Teachers who are part of this collaboration, work on their own artwork after school, similar to an informal open studio. This could include an exploration of another media shared and learned from another artist/teacher. Teacher performance is raised by these new ideas and techniques, which are then used in the classroom the following year. Teachers share their ideas with their peers through informal critique. Students are part of watching the creative process of professionals, engage in dialogue about the teacher's/artist's work, and may possibly explore similar techniques themselves. A body of finished artwork is the outcome at the end of the year.

The SSFA and District Fine Arts Departments, in conjunction with BOCES, plan, implement, and host a Regional Arts Day for art, music, theatre, and dance teachers from across the State. There are usually around 200 arts educators from 50 districts in attendance. Teachers can choose from a variety of workshops which encompass dance, theater, visual art and music. We have workshop presenters from all over the state.

One of the district's initiatives for Professional Development in the 2007-08 school year is literacy across the content areas, that includes the arts. Planning is underway to provide all staff with more resources to improve students reading and writing skills. The arts can provide a great motivator and vehicle for our students

Up to ten, fine arts teachers may join an art curriculum or music curriculum committee. These committees meet five days during the school year. Teachers are given release time in order to take part of this committee. This committee provides curriculum and materials to colleagues which are hands on, useful and immediate. Finished documents are standards based, use technology, differentiated instruction and integrate literacy across the content area. These final products are available on our district wide network and therefore instantly accessible to anyone, particularly new teachers.

Teachers can also take advantage of professional development offered through such places as Proctors Theatre, The Tang Museum at Skidmore, Capital Repertory Theater, and The Albany Institute of History and Art as well as grant funded professional development opportunities as they become available.

Describe any partnerships or collaborations the school district has developed with cultural institutions and community arts resources, including, but not limited to artist residencies, field trips, professional development opportunities for teachers, etc.

Students attend performances through Proctors Theater, The Palace Theater, Capital Repertory Theatre AAUW (American Association of University Women), The Egg, and The NYS Theater Institute.

Field trips may include, Albany Institute of History and Art, Children's Museum at Saratoga, Children's Museum of Science and Technology, Clark Art Institute, Empire State Aerosciences Museum, The Empire State Youth Orchestra, The Farmers' Museum, The Fenimore Art Museum, Hancock Shaker Village, Iroquois Indian Museum, MASS MoCHA, National Baseball Hall of Fame, New York State Museum, Planetarium Adventures, The Schenectady Museum and the The Tang Museum. Residencies are done through Proctors Theater, Ellen Sinopoli Dance Co., Ellen Senisi and Concerted Effort. Field trip tickets are underwritten through grants and the district. Often students pay for a part of transportation.

Visiting artists include The Hill Brothers, Marni Gillard, Music Mobile, Poppytown Puppets, The Puppet People, Scotia Glenville Children's Museum, Tom Knight Puppets, Greg Kenney, The Rusty Pipes, Schenectady Theater for Children, Bruce Hiscock, Red Grammer, Tony Vacca's World Rhythms, and Da Chen, a Chinese author. Our schools support these trips and residencies through their own funding, covering the cost of both tickets and transportation.

Describe expected student outcomes in the arts and your methods of assessing arts learning.

All students district wide have access and are encouraged to participate in the arts. There is equitable access to instructional programs in the arts throughout the school district. We expect students will develop an appreciation of the arts, become aware of the influences of the arts, and gain an aesthetic awareness. Students that have a strong interest in the arts will gain college acceptances, and produce unique and high quality performances and art exhibits. We believe our students should be exposed to a breadth of experiences in the arts.

Many outcomes in the arts are performance based. All of our schools have at least two concerts annually. At the high school level there are at least four major concerts annually. Our performance groups are active in the community performing at Senior Centers, Nursing Homes, for our younger students, or at community events. We attend appropriate venues such as the Oneida Jazz Festival, Melodies of Christmas, NYSSMA Festivals, joint performances with local community based choral groups, etc.

Each year students all levels participate in an All City event at Proctors Theatre. Each year there is a different focus, one year it is vocal music, then band, then instrumental. This includes our eleven elementary schools, three middle schools and high school.

Visual art is visible everywhere in our district. The entrance to our district offices has a student gallery space that showcases various levels throughout the school year. Our annual art exhibit is a community event that lasts approximately two weeks in a local mall. From this exhibit a small group of work is selected and travels for one year to various venues including Schenectady City Hall, Schenectady County Community College and the New York State School Boards Association. Students also participate in a HS Juried Regional Show, a HS Juried 3-Dimensional Show, and a Regional Media Arts Show.

Arts in Education is a key element, at all levels, to integrate the arts to improve learning in other areas. The integration of the arts as part of the core academic curriculum is something Schenectady does well. Examples from recent residencies intended to not only expand their arts awareness but also improve their academic performance include:

A district wide residency incorporates MopCo and Proctors Theatre as partners. In this residency, students work on reading for understanding through improvisation which boosts confidence. This residency is literacy based and meets the need to infuse literacy across the content areas. The residency culminates with a trip to Proctors for a related performance as well as a school wide performance by the 6th grade students for their peers.

A core group of 11th grade students, from the Sayles School of Fine Arts, that had not passed the Comprehensive English Exam, were brought together. The project was developed as part of our schools Strategic Plan for a Theatre/ELA project based on the play *Fences* by August Wilson. The students worked with a guest artist to read the play as a Staged Reading. They did several writing exercises related to the play in preparation for the Regents Exam, and they visited the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown for an exhibit on the Negro Baseball League, which relates to the theme of the play. This particular play was selected as there are also ties to the US History curriculum. In the evaluation of the students that followed, the most significant part of the project was the time spent in our theatre with the artist reading the play with the guest artist. They felt this had helped them the most.

SSFA Team 9 worked with Storyteller Marini Gillard, residencies that will be expanded upon in 2007-08 school year. The students focused on the Renaissance period. Both the English and Global History Teacher's on this team had just returned from a February Professional Development Arts Trip (completely funded by the teachers themselves) to Italy. Students worked with their teachers and Guest Artist to write stories developing characters, conflict, rising action, and resolution, then told the stories to elementary students.

Formal assessment occurs at both our middle school and high school levels. Our core courses including; Studio in Art, Music in Our Lives, Introduction to Theatre, and Introduction to Dance (See complete list for core courses) require a departmental assessment. These assessments are standards based and are intended as a graduation level exit assessment. For some of our students, the core course is the last course that they will take in their high school program. Our goal is to assure a common standard of knowledge. These assessments are divided into portions to assess a student's understanding of all of the arts standards. Additionally, several of our music performance groups participate in the Large Group Festivals and Solo NYSSMA competitions. Our Advanced Placement Drawing students compete nationally with results that support the quality of our K-12 instructional art program. Two of the past four years have resulted in 100% of the students passing the assessment. Since the start of our International Baccalaureate Art program we have had a 100% passing rate.

One of our greatest student outcomes in the arts is the level of success that our students have achieved in being accepted into exceptional college level arts programs. Recent graduates of the SSFA are pursuing arts education programs at ; The Berklee School of Music, Crane School of Music, NYC – studying composing, Tisch at NYU – Theatre, Pratt NYC; Buffalo – Dance, Skidmore – Dance, Williams College – Theatre, Syracuse – Visual Art, Boston University – Theatre, to name a few.

Role of School Board

Describe how the board has contributed to the development of arts education within the school district, including, but not limited to policy development, district long range/strategic plans for arts education, increasing commitment of general fund allocations, and cultivation of private or government grants. Please give specific examples.

In the late 1990's, Schenectady was facing several very tight budget years. At a budget session a proposal to cut some of the arts programs and bring the Schenectady budget within the level the community would support was presented. The community spoke and the Board of Education listened. The Schenectady tax base is declining. We are a high needs district. But this is also a community that values the arts. Cuts to the arts were not made and a Board of Education sub-committee for the arts was established. That committee remains a standing committee of the board today, some ten years later.

What grew out of that proposed cut was all positive for the arts in our district. The community wanted to expand programming and consider ways to include both dance and theatre into the curriculum. The Board voted in the spring of 1998 on a budget increase for the arts. This funding provided the seed money to establish the School of Fine Arts. This plan included establishing a theatre program and dance program as well as expanded music and art offerings. By 1999 a bond passed (3:1) to support the construction of the John Sayles School of Fine Arts at Schenectady High School. The Board, listening to our community, was the major driving force behind the development of the John Sayles School of Fine Arts.

The Board has continued to support the arts with increases in staffing and forward thinking about what is important in the lives of our students. Schenectady is not a rich district yet the programs that have been established are unique and creative and reflect a community that values the arts.

Project VIEW (Virtual Informal Education Web) was a 10.1 million dollar grant, which integrated the arts in a substantive way over a period of six years. Video conferencing units were placed in all schools enabling students to connect with museums across the country. During the grant period, 2000-2006, we had on staff a museum/school education coordinator to facilitate the integration of the technology with museums. Students took part in authentic learning, even traveling to places such as Washington to work in the Smithsonian and conducting video conferences with the Whitney, the Albright-Knox Museum and the Philadelphia Art Museum among others.

At Yates Arts in Education Magnet, they created a strategic plan that included comprehensive visual arts programs for all grades, beyond the district requirements, by collaborating on long term projects with classroom teachers. They also planned events involving; student research, presentations, costuming, food, art, dance and music.

How have members of the school board advocated for the inclusion of the arts in national, state, and local education reform efforts involving arts education standards and assessments? Describe examples of any efforts that have been made by the school district to include the arts in the core curriculum. Give specific examples.

The Board of Education in Schenectady City School District has a long standing practice of supporting the arts. We have a School Board Committee, The Fine Arts Committee led by Lisa Russo. This year, the committee is focused on promoting the rich arts programs we have district wide. As noted since 1997 when budgets could have drawn support away from the arts, our board listened to the needs of the community and its value in the arts. The arts is a part of our district mission and you will find creative leadership, a challenging curricula, innovative methods, the use of technology, strong partnerships and a safe and supportive climate for our students to thrive. All of our nearly 10,000 students have the opportunity and are encouraged to participate in the arts. We offer programming unique to our region in both theatre and dance that has brought students from surrounding districts in as tuition paying students for our fine arts programs. A graduate of the John Sayles School of Fine Arts finds themselves truly prepared for university or college study in any chosen field. Professional development for our staff exceeds that which is required by the state. Plans for Arts Day 2008 are currently underway and we anticipate 200 local arts professionals representing approximately 50 districts. Our arts staff boasts four Nationally Board Certified teachers. Schenectady is a community that values the arts as the district and community look to the future, we hope to be on the leading edge of expanding our arts partnerships with regional arts providers and artists.