



On Site/Insight



A Site-Specific Art Collaboration For Academic Achievement

Cooperate...Conceive...Create!

These are the vibrant ideas brought to life in a one-of-a-kind arts initiative bringing students together from across the city. ***On Site/Insight*** teams visual arts students from nationally recognized Grady High School with students from the newly formed Carver School of the Arts and M. Agnes Jones Elementary School. Funded by a \$7,000 Academic Enrichment Grant from The McCarthy-Dressman Education Foundation, ***On Site/Insight*** teaches high school students from diverse backgrounds to work together towards a common goal: improving academic achievement by mentoring 5th grade students. In Phase I of the project, 81 students from Grady and Carver studied at the High Museum of Art, analyzing masterworks from interdisciplinary, technical, formal, and philosophical perspectives. Special emphasis was placed on delving into the vast, exciting interdisciplinary world of contemporary art, which uses math, science, history, economics, and sociology as fuel for the creative process. At the museum, students experience firsthand modern art's conceptual sophistication, the monumental scale of contemporary artwork, and the intimate passion of outsider art in ways that they can see and feel. Too often, interdisciplinary approaches to art education reduce art to merely illustrating concepts in other subjects, eliminating the aesthetic, emotional, and intellectual characteristics of the creative process that makes art



unique and educationally vital. ***On Site/Insight*** uses an art centered approach. The soaring architecture and powerful artwork of the High opens eyes, minds, and emotions, helping students understand how interdisciplinary themes merge in artistic practice. For instance, students study the High's massive ***Drache***, a painting by Anselm Kieffer, which encapsulates the history of our attempts to understand the universe, from Ancient Egypt to NASA's use of the Hubble Space Telescope. Seeing how these themes become concentrated and distilled through the different aesthetic languages each artist uses, they understand how artistic expression is intimately linked to the world of ideas and learning, and how each artwork conveys a multi-dimensional context within which these open-ended meanings can be traced. In Phase II, students use this ability to see an artwork's interdisciplinary connections to analyze and design five community-based, site-specific artworks. Site-specific artwork takes many forms, and ***On Site/Insight*** encourages students to explore many different artistic genres—painting, sculpture, music, dance, drama, and spoken word performance—as their collaborative artworks are developed. All five site-specific artworks will be unveiled on April 18th, 2008 at the 2nd Annual Invitational Art Education Fair, which is an ongoing professional learning project of M. Agnes Jones Elementary School celebrating outstanding creative achievement by APS students.

Sponsored by The McCarthy-Dressman Educational Foundation with The High Museum of Art and Art Access



On Site/Insight uses the interdisciplinary practice of site-specific art to enrich students' lives, improve academic achievement, and foster parental involvement. Site specific art requires the analysis of a specific location, such as a neighborhood, building, room, park, etc. in terms of its historical, functional, social, philosophical, environmental, spatial, and aesthetic dimensions. Based on this analysis, site-specific artists conceive ways of transforming the site through temporary artworks such as sculptures, paintings, murals, multi-media installations, technology, and performances. *On Site/Insight* motivates students to excel through collaboration between at-risk and high-achieving students, between older and younger students, and through emersion in open-ended, creative problem solving. In this collaboration, the intellectual and aesthetic horizons of all participants are expanded through: increased interdisciplinary learning; the creative, conceptual, and technical challenges of making large-scale artworks; and parental involvement, all of which leads to an enriched view of the world and of one's own potential.



The site-specific artwork emerging out of this project is directly based on the experiences students share with each other and multi-dimensional analyses of the three school communities—their histories, current socio-economic realities, and their spatial, aesthetic, architectural, and environmental qualities. *On Site/Insight's* five site-specific art projects are:

The Cairns Project, in which students learn how making larger-than-life monuments connect people across time, space, and cultures (pictured at left); *A Thousand Words*, in which students gain confidence by exposing their art-making process in front of a live audience, responding to original spoken word, musical, and dance performances (pictured at left); *Spheres of Influence*, which uses

the universal image of the sphere to explore connections between science, art, dance, math, astronomy, politics, and cultures; *Dirt=Time*, in which students explore earth art as a new aesthetic language with artist Jeff Mather—and use the Pythagorean Theorem, archeology, and environmental science; and *Mind Signs*, which explores the ways people make and use signs by transforming their environment to conceive the world in new ways.