



Morristown Hamblen Executive Summary

The Birth of Arts Build Skills (ABS)

During convened meetings and discussions with business and industry, HC*EXCELL board members learned that the workforce in Hamblen County was in need of employees with improved critical thinking and problem solving skills. In the best case scenario, the foundation for these skills are obtained through art training beginning in elementary school. Since Hamblen County Elementary Schools do not have art teachers, our students have lagged behind in these areas.

From the early years of HC*EXCELL, the foundation has supplemented art in Hamblen County Schools through teacher grants, teacher art seminars and integration training and art field trips and programming for students. In 2012, HC*EXCELL launched a three-year “Cradle through Career Initiative” which included an **Arts Build Skills (ABS)** pilot program that addressed the impact of the Arts on student academic, reasoning and social performance skills.

The **ABS** pilot consisted of a five-week session of two afterschool classes per week one in **Math Art** and one in **Readers Theater**, for invited 2nd grade students at West Elementary School. The goal was to assimilate the arts into the overall school curriculum. Results were so encouraging that programming continued for a second and third year with an expanded protocol that included visual and performing art programming for the entire student body. Following the third year, the pilot was transitioned to Hillcrest Elementary where it continued to strengthen and improve student skills. Foundation funding was provided to support West and Hillcrest Elementary Schools in developing and improving their arts and curriculum integration.

In 2013, a middle school arts, business and industry pilot program was added to the initiative. This program began with HC*EXCELL linking industry partners with Meadowview Middle School teacher Kerry Stacy. This opportunity created an option for students to learn about local businesses, industries and their respective products and countries. In turn, the businesses and industries engaged with middle school students and learned about their school. Mrs. Stacy would choose a theme, in some cases the industry’s corporate home or product, and the students would design artwork around the theme. The best pieces were selected and taken by students to the industry or business for display. As a result, interaction between middle school students and the corporate world was reinforced.

In 2016, during the 25 year board review of foundation work, a new five-year initiative that included school readiness, critical thinking and problem solving skills, workforce development, post-secondary preparation and completion and educator professional development, appreciation, and recognition was developed. **SUCCESS**, a \$1.3 million dollar initiative, stands for **Strategically Utilizing Community Creativity Empowering Student Success**. The initiative is comprised of five components: **Ready by 6, Arts Build Skills, Workforce Development, Post-Secondary Readiness and Completion** and the **Herbert S. Walters Fund for Educators**.

The **ABS** Component was designated to receive \$250,000 of the \$1.3 million over a five year period. These funds have become the seed money for a community collaborative effort to integrate art programming into the curriculum of all eleven Hamblen County Elementary Schools and to expand the industry and business pilot into the four middle schools.

testimonial

Elementary art improved my visualization skills. Learning concepts such as value and texture at a young age made me appreciate others’ work and added depth to my own art. I was able to tap into my creativity and realize my own potential, allowing me to become the artist I am today.

- **Abby Siddiqi**, Sophomore
East High School

The Process

In 2016, HC*EXCELL convened art education stakeholders to form an **ABS** committee to develop a plan to increase art integration in Hamblen County schools. The committee was composed of a project manager, pilot school principals and assistants, community organizations, an HC*EXCELL Board member, and the HC*EXCELL Executive Director.

Year one of the SUCCESS initiative encompassed:

- expanding the committee to include arts education stakeholders
- hiring Deb Miksa as **ABS** Project Coordinator
- transitioning the **ABS** elementary pilot to Fairview-Marguerite Elementary School
- continuing support for West and Hillcrest Elementary Schools, and
- hosting a teacher Arts Integration Workshop for the pilot schools.

Additionally, the project manager met with school principals and presented an option for a system-wide elementary **ABS Day of the Arts** which was approved and held in March of 2017. During preparations for the **ABS Day of the Arts**, the project manager provided arts integration training to both teachers and students at six of the eleven elementary schools. Funding was increased to support the expansion of the Middle School Art and Industry program to Lincoln Heights Middle School.

Using the VMOSA (Vision, Mission, Objective, Strategies and Actions) model, the committee began work on an **Arts Build Schools Strategic Plan**. VMOSA is a practical planning process for community groups to use in defining a vision and developing practical ways to enact change. VMOSA helps an organization set and achieve short term goals while keeping sight of the long-term vision. (See appendix _ VMOSA –What is it?)

Year two plans include a system-wide elementary arts and curriculum integration teacher training program, in-school student and teacher trainings, a second **ABS Day of the Arts** and expansion of the Middle School Arts, Industry, and Business program to all four middle schools. In addition, the **Arts Build Skills Strategic Plan** will be completed and distributed. **HC*EXCELL** will partner with the Hamblen County School System to apply for a 360 Grant from the **Tennessee Arts Commission**.

testimonial

The arts are an essential part of the education process and a necessary component of a complete and balanced education. Study after study shows that when arts are part of the curriculum, the students' critical thinking skills increase.

As a community, we owe it to our children to give them the very best opportunities and teach some of life's most important skills, such as engagement and persistence. Simply put, supporting the arts in our schools will raise student achievement and success, putting them on a brighter path to the future.

- **R. Michael Fishman**

Editor/Publisher of the Citizen Tribune
and HC*EXCELL President

Arts Build Skills

Vision: The arts are an integral part of the curriculum for all Hamblen County elementary students.

Mission: To develop students' appreciation of the arts, critical thinking/problem solving skills and self-confidence by incorporating and expanding arts in Hamblen County Elementary and Middle Schools.

ABS Guiding Principles

