

# Arts Build Skills History



Initially, HC\*EXCELL began promoting the arts through teacher grant funds. In 1997 the foundation sponsored its first Hamblen County Teachers Arts Seminar. From that point, the foundation partnered with community organizations to provide art integration training to Hamblen County teachers and to provide art field trips and programming to students. Included in artistic experiences offered to students over the years are the Knoxville Symphony Middle and High School “Days with the Symphony”, a 1999 ten county Knoxville Symphony Concert at the Walters State Community College Pavilion for regional 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade students and support for student art performances and experiences in and out of the community.

During foundation engagements with business and industry board members became aware of the need for increased programming in critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Therefore, in 2012, when HC\*EXCELL launched the three-year “Cradle through Career Initiative”, an *Arts Build Skills (ABS)* pilot program was originated to explore the impact of the **Arts** on student critical thinking and problem-solving skills in addition to the impact on academic and social performance.

The *ABS* pilot consisted of a five-week session of two afterschool classes each week of Math Art and Readers Theater for invited 2nd grade students attending West Elementary School. The goal was to demonstrate the positive impact of teaching through the arts on student academic and social performance in order to integrate arts into the overall school curriculum. Program results were so encouraging that programming continued during a second and third year with endeavors expanding to include the five-week session varied art performances and school artwork. Following the third year, the pilot program was transitioned to Hillcrest Elementary where teachers and program managers continued to strengthen and improve program curriculum and result oriented components during the next two years. Funding continued to support both West and Hillcrest Elementary pilot schools in developing and improving their arts and curriculum integration.



A middle school arts, business and industry pilot program was added as well to the initiative.

This program consisted of one middle school teacher working with her/his students. HC\*EXCELL connected industry partners with the middle school to provide students with the opportunity to learn about local businesses and industries and their respective countries. In turn, the businesses and industries learned about the middle schools. The teacher would choose a theme, in some cases the industry’s corporate home or product, and the students would create artwork around the theme. The best art pieces were selected and taken by students to the industry or business for display for a period of time. As a result, interaction between middle school students, businesses and industries increased.

In 2016, the HC\*EXCELL Board reviewed the past 25 years of foundation work to improve student achievement and alignment of student skills with workforce needs. The result was a new five-year \$1.3 million **SUCCESS** campaign to support school readiness, critical thinking and problem solving skills, workforce development, post-secondary access and completion in addition to educator appreciation, recognition and professional development.

**SUCCESS** stands for *Strategically Utilizing Community Creativity Empowering Student Performance*. The initiative includes five components: **Ready by 6**, *Arts Build Skills*, Workforce Development, Post-Secondary Access and Completion and the Herbert S. Walters Fund for Educators.

The ABS Component was allocated \$250,000 over a five year period with \$50,000, a year, set aside for seed money to expand art programming in all eleven Hamblen County elementary schools.

A committee was formed in the 2017 fiscal year to begin work on a strategic plan and a project manager was hired.

The committee is composed of pilot school principals and assistants principals, community organizations, an HC\*EXCELL Board member, project manager and the HC\*EXCELL executive director.

During the 2017 year one, the *ABS original* pilot was transitioned to Fairview Marguerite, financial support was continued at West and Hillcrest Elementary Schools and a Teacher Arts Integration Training was held for the three pilot schools. Additionally, the committee project manager met with school principals and presented an option for a system-wide elementary *Arts Build Skills Day with the Arts*. The system-wide project was approved. In March of 2017, all eleven Hamblen County elementary schools participated in the first elementary *ABS Day with the Arts*. During preparations for the ABS Day with the Arts, the project manager provided arts integration training to both teachers and students at six of the eleven elementary schools.



The Middle School Art & Industry program was expanded to a second middle school.

Plans are in place for the second year that will include a system-wide elementary arts and curriculum integration teacher training program, another system-wide *ABS Day with the Arts* at all elementary schools, expansion of the Middle School Arts and Industry Program to all four middle schools, completion of the *Arts Build Skills Strategic Plan*, and in-school student and teacher training. In addition, HC\*EXCELL will partner with the Hamblen County School System to apply for a 360 Grant from the Tennessee Arts Commission.