

## USA (Ohio)

**Toledo School for the Arts**

*This secondary charter school for students aged 11 to 19, combines a college preparatory academic curriculum with an intense arts programme. The objective is that students acquire the self-motivation, discipline, creative problem solving, and concentration required to excel in the arts and transfer these qualities to academic classes. Training in the arts is intended to personally connect the students to their learning experiences and environment, to raise their self-esteem and to provide them with opportunities for modelling and team exercise. In addition, students gain business experiences through a social enterprise when they are booked as artists for community events. The school uses artistic studios, rehearsal spaces, art galleries and a theatre and employs both teachers and professional artists. Its extensive resources are financed in cooperation with community sponsors, and the school has a department that deals with fund raising. The school staff is involved in the dissemination of the integrated lesson plans to a broader educational audience. Parents are involved in the school and can use software to monitor their child's progress.*

**Main Focus of Innovation:** TEACHERS, CONTENT, RESOURCES, ORGANIZATION

**Other Keywords:** blended/non-formal, learning spaces

**General Information**

**Name of the ILE:** Toledo School for the Arts (TSA)

**Location/Address:** 333 14th Street, Toledo, OH 43604

**Website:** [www.ts4arts.org](http://www.ts4arts.org)

**ILE submitted by:** Toledo School for the Arts

**Rationale**

*Why do you suggest that it should be included in the project? How does it respond to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning challenges?*

TSA should be viewed as an innovative learning environment as our institution is one of only a handful of charter schools nationally that attempt to combine a college preparatory academic curriculum with an intense arts program. Arts programs are some of the most expensive to provide, given the special nature of the equipment required to provide opportunities in music, dance, theatre and visual arts. From supplies to musical instruments to recording labs to special dance floors and scenic construction space, arts programs are financially challenging.

TSA responds to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning challenges by understanding that the resources that a school can use can deeply impact student achievement. To ensure this impact is a positive one, TSA has created a great community of partners to enrich the performance of our students and increase learning. Shared space, human resources, materials and supplies provided by these organizations helps TSA's arts environment to model the professional world. We understand the learning requirements of the students from those that are gifted and talented to those who are struggling learners, and have set programs in place to make every child successful and achieve their greatest potential. TSA recognizes that if it is our desire to have greater student achievement than we will need to prepare our teachers to meet these needs.

**Learning Aims / Intended Learning Outcomes of the ILE**

*What are the core learning aims and which knowledge, skills or attitudes are to be acquired? (These may include outcomes related to learners' social, interpersonal, or meta-cognitive development)*

From a fledgling charter school comprised of 127 students in grades 7 through 9, operating with only minimal teachers & staff, to an excellent institution and cornerstone in the local arts community, TSA now serves 526 students from 24 school districts with over 70 staff. With arts integration as the goal in every classroom since our inception, TSA now infuses the arts in and outside of the classroom. Because of arts integration, we are confident that students have a more creative problem solving process, and are able to excel in tougher class offerings such as anatomy, statistics, chemistry, and pre-calculus. Our students learn business skills not only in the classroom, but now through social enterprise, as our artists are booked throughout the year for an impressive array of community events.

TSA works to instil the valuable qualities of self-motivation, discipline, and creative problem solving in each of our learners. Students are involved in constant team exercise, and apply academic content in the arts and vice versa to reinforce learning and enhance understanding. As the discipline required to excel in the arts improves, so does the discipline required to excel in academics. The student who works at moulding a piece of clay for 50 minutes each day builds an ability to focus on the study of History with the same intensity. The student, who works on a dance sequence with steady repetition until it is perfected, will develop a deeper concentration which makes complex math problems less intimidating. The reinforcement of skill development leads to a higher self esteem as our students continue to improve and succeed both in performance and academic assessment.

**Learners**

*Which group(s) of learners is it aiming at? Who is eligible to take part? How many learners are there? What are their ages?*

As one of the most diverse learning communities in the state of Ohio, we have attendance from 24 school districts. Our student body is 19% African-American, 9% Hispanic, 7% Bi-racial, 1% Asian and 65% Caucasian. Thirty-four percent of our attendance qualifies for Title 1. We accept enrolment of any Ohio secondary student with no tuition costs. We have 526 students, ranging from age 11 to age 19. The average class size is approximately 19 students.

**Facilitators**

*Who are the teachers/facilitators? Who are the leaders? What are their professional backgrounds? What are their roles?*

TSA employs 38 full-time teachers and two teachers' aides. Our full-time academic instructors are fully certified by the State of Ohio and considered highly qualified. We also have eighteen part-time teachers, artists and musicians on staff. These professionals provide our students with exemplary training and real world experience in various artistic fields. We employ two Special Education professionals, a school psychologist, two full-time guidance counsellors, two guidance assistants, a paraprofessional for each division, a full-time technology coordinator and a part-time EMIS coordinator; all to ensure efficient operations and ultimately, an environment that supports student success.

A dedicated Board of Directors, coming from varied professional and personal backgrounds, supervises our leadership team. This team is comprised of Director Martin Porter, Artistic Director David Saygers, Development Director David Gierke, Treasurer Kelley Allred and Principals Howard Walters and Nicholas Mariano.

Martin Porter is the founding Director of TSA, and came to TSA from the Lima Council for the Arts where he served as Executive Director. He has also served as Director of Public Events and Director of the Creative Arts Program for the College of Musical Arts at Bowling Green State University. As a trumpeter, he has shared the stage with the Four Tops, The Temptations, Johnny Mathis and many others. David Saygers joined TSA as Artistic Director in 1999. He is an active musician and educator, and a former music professor of the University of Toledo, Bowling Green State University, the Tennessee Technological University and Heidelberg College. David also served as Coordinator of Music Education and Public Programs for the Toledo Museum of Art.

David Gierke is well known in Toledo from his many years as co-owner of Dave's Drum Depot and director of The Toledo Drum School in Toledo. Dave toured the East coast with a popular show band before opening the Depot. His "Rhythm Circles" program has been used by educators and music therapists throughout the United States. Dave also designs programs for disadvantaged youth, preschools, educator in service training programs and corporate team building seminars. Kelley Allred graduated with a Bachelor of Science, Magna Cum Laude from Lourdes College in May 1994. She most recently held a position as Secondary Market Analyst with Sky Financial Group. Kelley holds an Ohio School Treasurer License.

Howard Walters received his Specialists degree in Administration and Supervision in 1978 from the University of Toledo and is certified in Comprehensive Socials Science and Music. He has taught subjects ranging from Vocal Music to Economics in various educational settings. Mr. Walters spent five years as assistant principal, and principal at Port Clinton High School. He was an adjunct professor at Bowling Green State University before joining TSA. Nick Mariano has taught at every grade level K-12. Nick has served as an assistant elementary principal, assistant high school principal, and the admissions director. Prior to this he taught K-8 at a Philadelphia residential treatment centre for children with severe behavioural issues. Nick graduated from Cedarville University with his bachelor's in Education and a minor in Art. He earned his Masters in Educational Leadership and Administration from BGSU.

**Learning Context**

*In which context does learning take place? What does the physical learning environment look like? Are community resources used to facilitate learning and how?*

TSA provides traditional education in a non-traditional environment. We are located in downtown Toledo, and students consider the downtown area to be their campus. TSA operates out of its own space, with 50,000 square feet of classroom and computer lab space and 25,000 square feet of artistic studios and rehearsal spaces. Other spaces of interest include two art galleries, our "Flying Pig" cafeteria and the Attic Theatre.

With the traditional classroom environment under the same roof as intensive studio experience, students are kept in constant close proximity to learning experiences to which they feel personally connected. High expectations reinforce successful learning and understanding. In studios, learners and facilitating artists participate together, providing excellent modelling opportunities.

In addition to hands-on classroom experience, academic lesson plans are often infused with technology to better prepare students for higher education and the workforce. Students change classes each period, giving them not only the advantage of learning from someone with a love and passion for the subject, but also exposing students to a variety of teaching styles and approaches that share one common element: a focus on excellence.

Ohio standards for academics, arts and career technical education form the basis for TSA curriculum, and are exceeded by local application. Additional pedagogy includes arts and academic integration for which teachers are permitted extra planning time. Currently our staff is involved in a dissemination grant to provide these integrated lesson plans to a broader educational audience.

TSA offers students opportunities to work with professional artists to expand their art experiences and knowledge. TSA has developed lasting and meaningful relationships (which we call “ARTnerships”) with Toledo’s major cultural institutions, including (but not nearly limited to) the Toledo Symphony, the Arts Commission of Greater Toledo, the Toledo Museum of Art and the Toledo Repertoire Theatre. Other ARTnerships that enhance student learning are the Toledo Botanical Garden, the Toledo Lucas County Public Library, Owens Community College, the University of Toledo and Toledo Area Metroparks. In addition, our sponsor Bowling Green State University is very engaged, providing us with valuable collaborative opportunities.

TSA parents are very involved in their student's growth. Thanks to new software, parents can monitor their students’ progress throughout all grading periods. Parent teacher conferences are held twice per year, and additional meetings can be requested. TSA holds open houses on the first Friday of every month, and it is very common for our performance space to be standing room only due to the amount of parents attending to support their children. Our Guidance Department facilitates well attended financial aid and college presentations. TSA has a Parents' Organization, and the membership has nearly doubled since last year. The Parents' Org coordinates volunteer opportunities for parents, serves as a valuable resource for parents new to TSA's busy environment, holds a seat at our Board table and aids our teachers in fundraising for particular trips and projects. TSA keeps in touch with parents through regular mailings, a quarterly newsletter, email and our One Call phone update system.

### **History of ILE**

*Who initiated it? For what reasons was it started and with what purpose? Have these changed since?*

The ILE was conceived by the founding Board of Trustees in 1997. The Board included artists, veteran education professionals, arts patrons and individuals who share a deep concern for quality education in the inner city. TSA's innovative learning environment was created to provide students with creative opportunities to achieve personal and academic success through arts based learning. Our process prepares students as life-long learners and productive members of society with an appreciation for, and competence in, the arts. The Board conceived of starting an arts school as a private school initially but feared the tuition costs would eliminate students in poverty. After exploring a joint-vocational model the charter school legislation was passed in the state of Ohio in 1997. The board then filed the appropriate paper work to begin a charter.

**Funding of the ILE***How is it funded?*

TSA operates on state allocated per pupil funding, contributions from foundations, donors and businesses, as well as money brought in through fundraising initiatives. As charter schools operate mainly on the state allocated funds, Toledo School for the Arts receives no local taxes and exists on \$2 million less than a traditional public school of the same size. We have instituted a Development department to close this gap, and raise approximately \$270, 00 per year to sustain and support the growth of our institution.

**Learning Outcomes***What are the learning outcomes achieved by the ILE, including academic, social, interpersonal and meta-cognitive outcomes? How is learning assessed?*

TSA assessment is based on a variety of informational resources (e.g. portfolios, performances, facilitator observation and conversation). Verbal or written feedback to the learner is primarily descriptive and emphasizes strengths, identifies challenges and gives direction to the next steps.

The outcome of TSA's innovative strategies is very positive; with a 100% graduation rate in 2009 and nearly 90% of those graduated pursuing higher education. TSA has been rated Excellent by the Ohio Department of Education for the past four years and was one of only eight charter schools to be featured in the U.S. Department of Education publication, *Innovations in Education*.

**Documentation describing or evaluating the ILE***Is there documentation on this learning environment? Is there a website? Films? Research reports or evaluations? Other forms of documentation? (please supply references or links)*

TSA was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a Blue Ribbon School in 2008, and is a 2010 America's Best High School Bronze Medalist as rated by U.S. News and World Report.