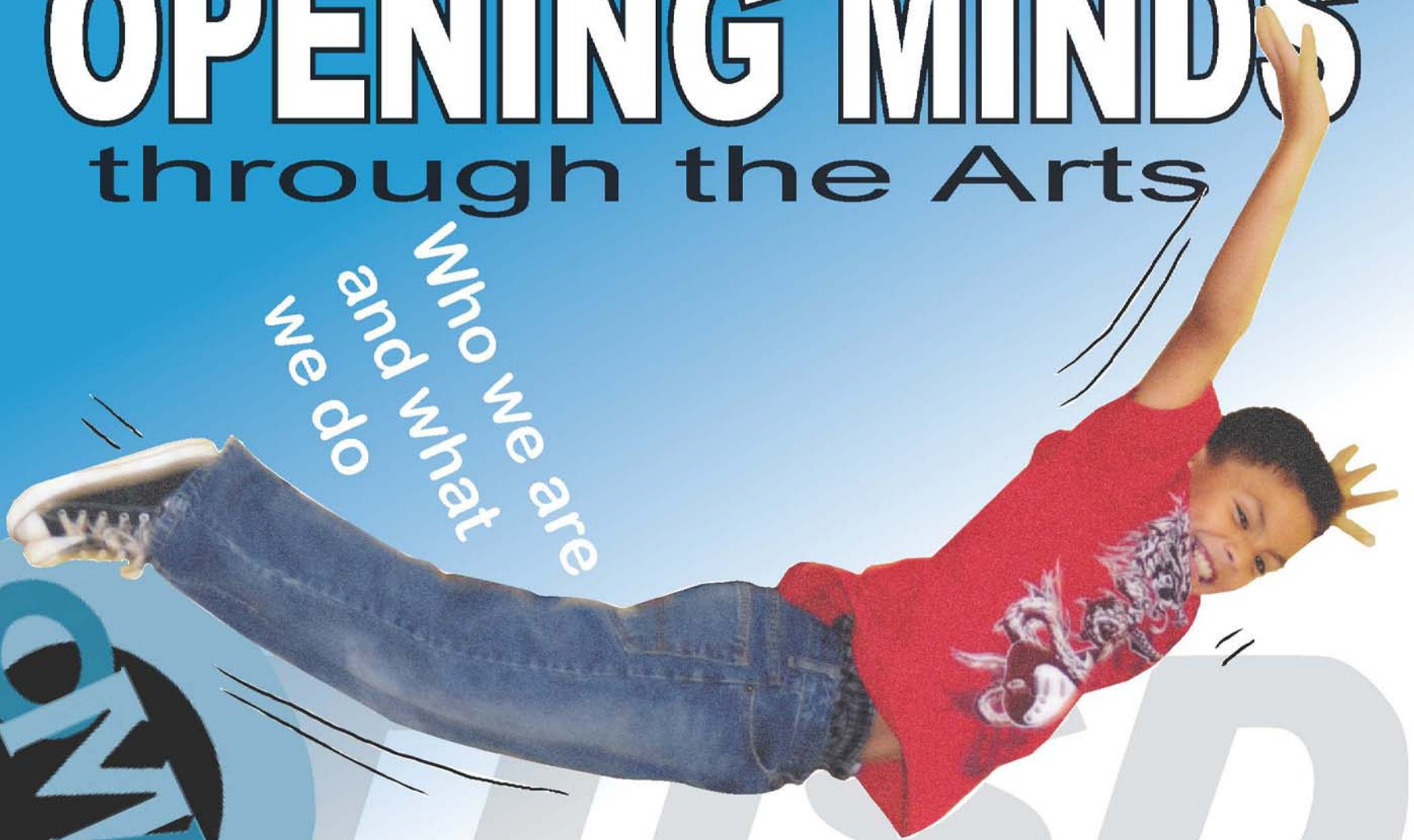


# OPENING MINDS

through the Arts

Who we are  
and what  
we do



**TUSD**

[www.tusd1.org/oma/](http://www.tusd1.org/oma/)

- Part of a happy childhood

## ***OMA-TUSD – Opening Minds through the Arts in the Schools***



### **What is OMA-TUSD?**

OMA-TUSD is a student achievement and school improvement program, a homegrown and nationally recognized innovative approach to learning. Our mission is to creatively serve the educational needs of children. It is grounded in brain-based research, multi-intelligence theories, and the neurological development of children. Supporters' resources go directly to student services within our community.

### **How did OMA-TUSD begin?**

In 1999, H. Eugene Jones, a business entrepreneur, Dr. Carroll Rinehart, a music educator, and Dr. Joan Ashcraft, the Fine Arts Director of Tucson Unified School District, all shared a concern regarding the effectiveness of arts education in the public schools. They formed a team of educators, artists, and arts organizations to study the latest brain-based research and successful arts programs across the nation. Impressed with the achievement data from a program they observed in North Carolina, they designed a model that would integrate the fine arts with the Arizona's tested academic curriculum. With a generous donation of start-up funds from H. Eugene Jones, and then, three significant grants from the United States Department of Education, OMA-TUSD was born. Over the years, it has grown into one of the premier national models for arts integration.

### **How does OMA-TUSD accomplish this goal?**

Through a collaborative team comprised of Teaching Artists, Arts Integration Specialists, Classroom Teachers and Principals. The team members have separate, but over-lapping roles.

**OMA Teaching Artists** are not professional educators, but professional artists who educate. Traveling from school to school, they are dedicated to enriching the educational experience. The artists are, first and foremost, trained in a specific art form: instrumental music, theater arts, visual arts, opera, or dance, but integrating art with curriculum is not merely their sideline - it is their specialty. Most of our Teaching Artists hold higher degrees, including several doctorates. The relationship between artists and students is a magical one, for children, like artists, share a passion for the things they love.

Trained in risk-taking, the artists serve as a positive role model to the children, urging them to step out of their comfort zone and confidently try new ideas and experiences. Teaching Artists receive training throughout the year and during an annual five day summer intensive where they share arts integration strategies while perfecting and honing their teaching skills.



The **Arts Integration Specialist, or AIS**, is the “artistic director” of his/her school, and is either a certified art specialist or master classroom teacher who is specially trained to teach children to link the creative structures of the arts with the concepts of the curriculum.



The **Classroom Teacher** at an OMA school is the instructional leader of the creative classroom. Along with the **Principal**, they ensure that arts integration produces understanding in their students, for without understanding there is no learning. This methodology of imaginative thinking, rather than rote instruction, is important training for our children’s future. As outlined in such seminal books as Daniel Pink’s *A Whole New Mind* and Jonah Lehrer’s *Imagine*, the ability to think creatively and recognize connections between previously established systems and technologies is currently producing some of our best new advances and solutions. Like the Teaching Artists, the classroom teachers, principals, and Arts Integration Specialists are provided with professional development sessions in arts integration throughout the year, as well as their own four day summer intensive entitled *IDeA: Instructional Designs for the Arts*.

**This unique, four-part collaborative team of Teaching Artist/AIS/Classroom Teacher/ Principal sets OMA-TUSD apart and above other programs.**

Opening Minds through the Arts is more than an extra-curricular arts program. Depending on their grade level, children at a fully implemented OMA-TUSD school will, for 36 weeks, receive **60 to 120 minutes per week** of quality arts-curriculum integration. It is a consistent, intrinsic part of the students’ educational experience throughout the year.

### **Who is our constituency?**

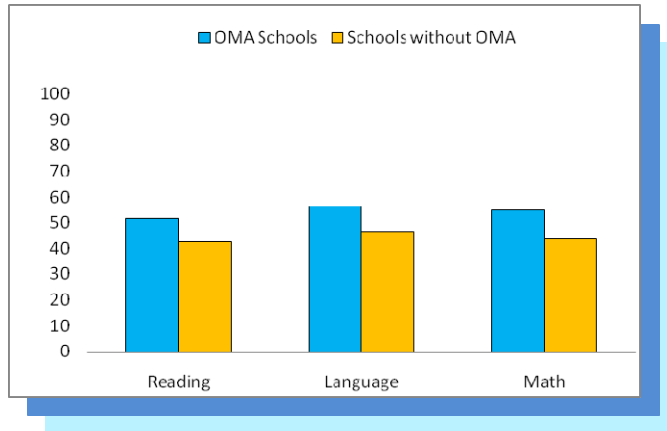
In fall of 2012, OMA will be in all of Tucson Unified School District’s elementary schools, presented in various forms to serve best the individual needs of the school and its children. The program, now approaching its thirteenth year, is a flexible design that has allowed it to respond quickly to changes in the educational needs of the community. Efficiently and economically managed, it assesses no administrative fees to the schools.

### **Does it work?**

Research proves that OMA-TUSD works. This research is not generic or general, but was specifically designed and implemented for our model of arts integration by the nationally recognized, independent research firm WestEd, Inc. Their report includes student achievement and teacher effectiveness data that has help guide the program’s implementation and growth, not only in TUSD, but throughout Tucson and the surrounding community.

Research shows that arts integration is one of the most effective ways to reach lower performing students.





*“OMA mitigates the impact of poverty, the lack of English proficiency . . .*

- WestEd research

After WestEd’s initial findings, we continued with our own in-house research, the goal of which is two-fold. First, we look at the various ways the OMA Program enhances student achievement, both through traditional tests scores and more “qualitative” methods of measuring creativity and critical thinking in children. Secondly, we constantly evaluate the program to ensure that all aspects continue to provide quality services to our students. This is accomplished through observations of Teaching Artists and AISs, surveys, and self-assessments of teachers, as well as on-going professional development.

*“This experience has changed them so much! My students have matured into critical thinkers. Everything they needed to know was in the dance.”*

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Teacher

Van Buskirk Elementary School



First graders at TUSD’s Kellond Elementary School perform the finale of their original opera.

**OMA-TUSD is not . . .**

OMA-TUSD is not a business model for education. It is an educational model. Our concern is with our students advancing in their academics, social skills, critical thinking, and creative problem solving.

OMA-TUSD is not a passing educational trend – creative expression and the arts are the oldest tools humans have used to explain their world and order their reality.

OMA-TUSD is not a plan that places new burdens on the classroom teachers or the schools. The AIS and Teaching Artists comprise a support system to help teachers bring a deeper understanding of the curriculum to their students. The staff of TUSD’s Fine Arts Department is used to administer the program, so OMA can be provided to schools without administration fees.

Although there are no limitations, OMA-TUSD is not a plan to institute a national franchise in education. We work locally with realistic goals in order to produce true successes.

*If there is one consistent lesson that one gleans by studying school reform over the past century, it is the danger of taking a good idea and expanding it rapidly, spreading it thin. What is stunningly successful in a small setting, nurtured by its founders and brought to life by a cadre of passionate teachers, seldom survives the transition where it is turned into a large-scale reform.*

-- Diane Ravitch

### *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*



### **What is the future of OMA-TUSD?**

Superintendent Dr. John Pedicone has envisioned an ambitious goal: In five years, every kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade student in TUSD will have the OMA experience.

Our newest addition to OMA-TUSD’s outreach is the internet publishing of our first book on Amazon.com, ***Opening Minds through the Arts: A Model for Rethinking Education***, a collection of descriptive stories and arts integration lesson activities.

### The future of OMA is expanding!

Currently OMA is fully implemented in 15 OMA Mentor School, which have 36 weeks of arts integration instruction in four art forms. In addition, exciting expansion programs are taking place in another 27 Exploratory Residency Schools, which will have a 5-week OMA experience in several art forms or a nine week OMA Visual Arts Residency.

#### The OMA Mentor Schools:

Corbett	Ford	Kellond	Miller	Tully
Cragin	Fruchthendler	Lineweaver	Robins	Van Buskirk
Dietz	Howell	Marshall	Sewell	Alice Vail Middle School

#### The OMA Exploratory Residency and Affiliate Schools:

Blenman	Collier	Hughes	Maldonado	Soleng Tom	Wright
Bloom	Erickson	Johnson	Mission View	Vesey	Whitmore
Booth	Grijalva	Lawrence	Roskruge	Warren	
Borman	Henry	Lyons	Rose	Wheeler	
Brichta	Hudlow	Lynn	Schumaker	White	

### What can a gift to OMA-TUSD accomplish?

Next year, up to 12 of our current Exploratory Residency Schools will want to join the ranks of TUSD schools that offer the full implementation of OMA to their students. District funds and governmental support do not cover the full expense of the program. Remaining costs are the responsibility of the individual schools. This responsibility, primarily covered by tax-credit funds, can be a hardship for low-income schools that do not enjoy a strong tax-credit donation base. Almost 70% of TUSD's students are from families that live below the federal poverty level. Schools that cannot cover the remaining cost must either delay implementation, or in some cases, cut back on existing programs OMA programs.



Direct donations to the OMA Gifts and Donations Account can help the schools and the children who have the greatest need at both our Mentor and Exploratory Residency sites.

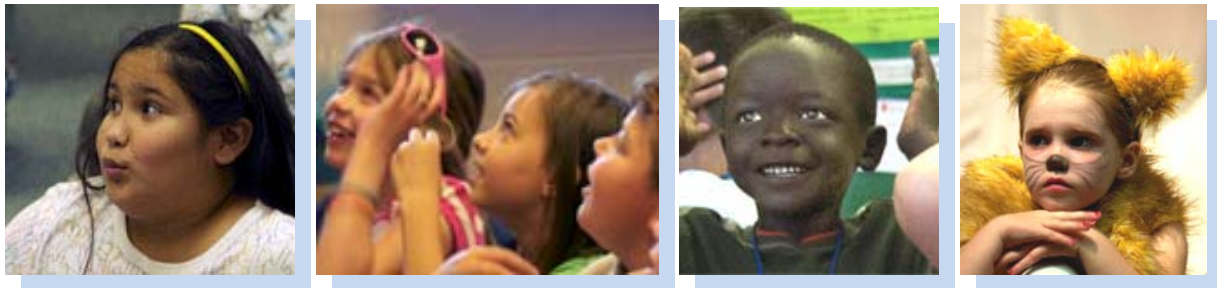
- A gift of \$5,000 provides dance arts integration for a school's second graders for 45 minutes a week for 36 weeks, which will improve their kinesthetic development and increase their understanding of mathematical concepts.
- A gift of \$6,000 provides a five-week exploratory arts integration residency in multiple art forms for a school's kindergarteners through third graders.
- A gift of \$12,000 provides an instrumental duo for kindergarten student for 60 minutes a week for 36 weeks, increasing their listening skills and auditory acuity.
- A gift of \$18,000 provides a 3 person opera team for

a middle school's students for 60 minutes a week for 36 weeks, which will strengthen vocabulary and enhance reading and writing skills.

- A gift of \$30,000 provides a full cadre of Teaching Artists to an OMA school for a year.

Your donations go directly to providing services to our community's children, not administration costs, or teacher trainings. Donating is easy and greatly appreciated. Community members can make their check to:

TUSD Fine Arts/OMA Gifts & Donations Account  
TUSD Fine Arts/OMA  
2025 East Winsett Street  
Tucson, AZ 85719



... photography by Roger Pfeuffer, former TUSD Superintendent

**The OMA-TUSD Teaching Artists, AISs, classroom teachers, and principals are committed to empowering students for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – academically, socially, and culturally.  
Children are the focus of our work.**

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To arrange a visit to a OMA Mentor School, or for more information on OMA-TUSD contact Joan Ashcraft at [Joan.Ashcraft@tusd1.org](mailto:Joan.Ashcraft@tusd1.org), or Thom Lewis at [Thom.Lewis@tusd1.org](mailto:Thom.Lewis@tusd1.org), or call OMA-TUSD at 520-225-4900  
Visit the TUSD-OMA web page at [www.tusd1.org/oma/](http://www.tusd1.org/oma/)

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**OMA-TUSD Accomplishments & Accolades:**

OMA-TUSD has been featured in numerous educational books such as , *Education Nation: Six Leading Edges of Innovation in Our Schools*, by Dr. Milton Chen; *Innovation the Pixar Way*, by Bill Capadagli & Lynn Jackson; Harvard's Project Zero publication, *Qualities of Quality: Excellence in Arts Education and How to Achieve It*; and was the subject of a documentary video for the George Lucas Foundation's website, [Edutopia.org](http://Edutopia.org).

OMA-TUSD has received financial assistance from the Stocker Foundation, the Marshall Foundation, the Emerald Foundation, and the Target Corporation, as well as three major multi-year grants from the United States Department of Education totaling more than \$5,000,000. OMA-TUSD has awarded a "Lumie" from the Tucson Pima Arts Council, and is a two-time recipient of the Arizona Governor's Arts Award for Arts In Education.

Most Recently:

Read the *Tucson Weekly's* article on OMA-TUSD, featuring our Opera Teaching Artist, Dennis Tamblin at: <http://www.tucsonweekly.com/tucson/help-kids-learn/Content?oid=3200585>

"It's so rewarding! If I didn't believe in this program, I couldn't do it. The rewards come to me when I perform. Here, the rewards go to the kids. If you don't put boundaries on children, they can do whatever they want."

- Dennis Tamblin,  
OMA-TUSD Teaching Artist

Check out OMA-TUSD's new book ***Opening Minds through the Arts: A Model for Rethinking Education***, a 271 page anthology by members of the OMA Design team – teaching artists, arts integration specialist, classroom teachers and principals soon to be available at Amazon.com.

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