

What is Building Community Through the Arts (BCTA)?

BCTA is a program implemented by the Maine Alliance for Arts Education in schools throughout Maine since 2000.

- § **BCTA connects a theater or dance educator with an academic class for two weeks of intensive in-class student collaboration** devoted to creating an original short drama or movement performance.
- § **The created piece is based on** either social issues or on a topic in the curriculum.
- § **This in-class activity is followed by a performance** – also an opportunity for the students to reflect together on the impact of the experience – either at a regional “conference” gathering of students from all the participating classes and schools and/or an evening performance for the community.
- § **Schools and classes are self-selected** by principals and teachers based on their interest. The program has been used by a wide variety of academic classes.

What are the goals of BCTA?

To give all students – those who typically participate in the arts and those who do not -- the opportunity to:

- § **build a positive sense of community and mutual trust** and reduce negative social behaviors among students.
- § **participate in a collaborative arts activity** in creative theater and movement and develop skills in those art forms.
- § **use the creative process as a tool to enrich academic curriculum and communicate about issues they care about** with each other and adults in the community.

What are some examples of how BCTA has been used by classes?

BCTA has been applied in a variety of ways.

Integrated with the Curriculum

- **Dance** as a medium for studying Homer’s *Odyssey*, Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, Miller’s *Crucible* and other literature greats as well as student poetry, Spanish verbs, and even chemistry!
- **Drama** as a medium for exploring themes such as rumor, intolerance, and stereotyping as found in Hawthorne’s *Scarlet Letter*, Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye*, and Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

For Processing Social Issues

Drama as a medium for exploring:

- **at-risk behavior issues** such as partying and alcohol/drug use, sexual activity;
- **peer relationship issues** such as bullying, cliques, intolerance, friendships, rumors, violence, suicide;
- **family issues** such as relationships with parents, family expectations, alcoholism, fighting;
- **school issues** such as performance stress, fairness, and relationships with teachers;
- **community issues** such as youth alienation, feelings of rural isolation, boredom, and specific community issues

For more information on *Building Community Through the Arts*: Contact Susan Potters, Education Director of the Maine Alliance for Arts Education at MAAEbangor@aol.com or 676-9494.

What have we learned about the impact of BCTA?

A pre- and post-survey completed by participating students along with feedback from other students, teachers, parents and artists tell us BCTA has substantial impact on:

Classroom Social Climate –

- § **Students feel a greater sense of:**
 - ü mutual caring and respect
 - ü their own and others' contribution to the class
 - ü friendship, belonging, breaking down cliques
 - ü understanding themselves and each other
 - ü having another way to express their ideas

Classroom Learning–

Students gain:

- ü **new perspective on learning** and contributing to the classroom learning experience
 - ü greater personal **ownership of and pride in their learning**
 - ü positive understanding of and appreciation for **theater and dance**
 - ü new confidence and **joy in being creative**
 - ü **confidence** in their ability to communicate their ideas to each other and adults
 - ü **personal efficacy** – to work with others to create something meaningful and make a difference!
- § The pre and post surveys tell us the vast majority of students from all participating classes have **positive opinions about the program.**
- § Teachers tell us BCTA **improves the atmosphere for learning** in the classroom long after the program is over! Students become more engaged, especially the quiet students.

Inclusion of Students with Disabilities –

- § **BCTA is an ideal way to include all students** - those with behavioral problems and those with even severe learning and/or physical disabilities - into regular classroom activities.

Connection with Parents and Community..

- ü **BCTA performances show** teens who are inspired, excelling, and engaged in their learning.
- ü Parents are energized by the **students' interest in the curriculum and in social and community issues.**
- ü Communities and students gain a sense of empowerment to have such a **positive way of communicating** with each other!
- ü BCTA has and can serve as a **catalyst for addressing important youth issues** in the community.

...and Connection Between Communities!

- § The BCTA regional conference is a unique **opportunity for students from different schools to interact in a positive, supportive and non-competitive atmosphere.**

Pre-Post Project Student Survey Highlights

“All the class members get along very well together” –
Pre-project- 14% “strongly agreed” with this statement to Post-project - 35% “strongly agreed” !

Similarly...

“Members of this class respect each other despite our differences” – **Pre 15% to Post 30%!**

“I believe each member of this class makes some important contribution to the class” – **Pre 14% to Post 31%!**

“The process of creating in dance and/or theater helps us to understand ourselves and relate to each other”
Pre 17% to Post 31%!

“Creative dance and/or theater offer was of expressing our ideas” – **Pre 26% to Post 45%!**

For more perspective on the positive results of the Program, please look to the pre-post student survey results and the participants' quotes presented on the next page.

Pre-Post Test Student Results					
QUESTIONS	“Strongly Agree”	“Agree”	“Undecided”	“Disagree”	“Strongly Disagree”
1. All the members of the class get along very well together.					
Pre-	13.5%	53.1%	19.3%	12.6%	1.4%
Post-	34.6%	55.9%	5.7%	2.8%	0.9%
2. The members of this class respect each other despite our differences.					
Pre-	15.0%	51.7%	22.2%	10.1%	1.0%
Post-	29.9%	49.8%	12.8%	6.2%	1.4%
3. I feel responsible for treating all my classmates with respect.					
Pre-	33.7%	52.4%	7.7%	4.8%	1.4%
Post-	46.4%	44.5%	8.1%	0.5%	0.5%
4. I feel responsible for seeing that my classmates get treated with respect.					
Pre-	15.4%	49.0%	20.2%	12.5%	2.9%
Post-	22.3%	56.4%	14.7%	5.2%	1.4%
5. There are no cliques in this class that exclude others.					
Pre-	9.2%	25.7%	30.1%	21.8%	13.1%
Post-	14.4%	30.3%	27.9%	19.7%	7.7%
6. Everyone in this class has at least one friend in this class.					
Pre-	43.2%	38.8%	10.7%	5.3%	1.9%
Post-	55.0%	36.5%	4.3%	2.4%	1.9%
7. Nobody in this class gets left out.					
Pre-	15.5%	40.1%	24.6%	16.4%	3.4%
Post-	26.2%	46.7%	15.2%	10.5%	1.4%
8. I believe each member of this class makes some important contribution to the class.					
Pre-	13.5%	47.8%	21.7%	14.5%	2.4%
Post-	30.8%	48.8%	15.2%	3.3%	1.9%
9. I believe that I have something to contribute to my class.					
Pre-	25.9%	54.6%	13.7%	5.4%	0.5%
Post-	30.5%	58.1%	7.6%	3.3%	0.5%
10. There is no one in this class that I am not willing to work with.					
Pre-	27.7%	38.3%	14.1%	10.7%	9.2%
Post-	37.6%	44.3%	9.5%	6.7%	1.9%
11. There is no one in this class that is not willing to work with me.					
Pre-	11.2%	31.2%	45.4%	7.3%	4.9%
Post-	21.0%	36.2%	36.7%	3.8%	2.4%
12. I have participated in creative dance and/or theater activities.					
Pre-	21.1%	25.5%	9.3%	20.1%	24.0%
Post-	45.0%	38.3%	4.3%	6.2%	6.2%
13. I enjoy participating in creative dance and/or theater activities.					
Pre-	19.4%	23.8%	23.3%	14.6%	18.9%
Post-	32.7%	43.6%	10.9%	6.6%	6.2%
14. The process of creating in dance and/or theater helps us to understand ourselves and relate to each other.					
Pre-	16.5%	33.5%	30.1%	11.2%	8.7%
Post-	30.5%	45.7%	16.7%	3.3%	3.8%

Pre-Post Test Student Results					
QUESTIONS	“Strongly Agree”	“Agree”	“Undecided”	“Disagree”	“Strongly Disagree”
15. Creative dance and/or theater offer ways of expressing our ideas.					
Pre-	25.6%	38.9%	20.7%	5.9%	8.9%
Post-	45.4%	41.5%	6.8%	2.9%	3.4%

In the Voice of Participants

Students

“I respect kids I never did before. We’ve been together forever but I didn’t know them really.”
 “I like it when everyone would share their ideas and they weren’t turned down.”
 “I didn’t think we would be able to do it, but we did and we were good.”
 “It was pretty cool how people wanted to talk about our play and the way we used issues from real life!”
 “I felt I could finally show what I could do. I found where my talents lay, and it was a rush!”

Artists

“Because the work they do in dance or theatre involves *their* voices, bodies and minds in ways they don’t usually get to exercise and explore, it is an opportunity to shake inhibitions and expand their comfort zones.”
 “When students can reflect upon themselves in the context of their community and start to respect their own potential as artists and human beings, we know we have given them a chance.”
 “BCTA reaches students at their core – which is what the arts do best!”

Teachers

“Parents were thrilled and proud. One mother told me her daughter was changed because of the program. She wished that the dance integration could be an ongoing course. I and several of my students agreed with her!”
 “This program let us all, teacher and student alike...see each other thinking on their feet!”
 “Students were encouraging each other, taking constructive criticism from peers, and all recognized the value of each individual in the success of the performance.”
 “The class that participated in the drama project is now the only class where every single student is passing, and passing with nice grades. The project was a wonderful morale booster.”
 “The thrill of experiencing a college atmosphere during the conference at the University of Maine, even for just a day, and of meeting with students from around the state, cannot be overestimated for those who work and study in geographic isolation.”
 “Because it was at the beginning of the year, and because it is creative writing in which trust and mutual respect is of utmost importance (they have to share their personal writings with each other throughout the year), this really made the class a huge success all year.”