

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Contact: Dawn Goodman Washington

Phone: 240.645.0730

Email: dgoodman@artsontheblock.com



Youth Succeed in Explore-Create-Connect

Local arts-integrated program for middle schoolers leads to marked improvement in student attendance, social-connectivity, and community engagement.

Kensington, MD - June 20, 2017: The youth-centered Explore-Create-Connect (ECC) program is an after school, inquiry-based program that engages incoming 6th graders in dance, visual art, and hip-hop poetry techniques while learning 21st Century skills like critical thinking, creativity, planning, and collaboration. Created by Arts on the Block in partnership with Briggs Chaney Middle School (BCMS), ClancyWorks Dance, and IMPACT Silver Spring developed the ECC *Theory of Change* which aligns with positive youth development principles and emphasizes that “increasing student attendance, and parent and student connectedness to the academic and East County communities will result in improved academic and social success” for students in the program.

Explore-Create-Connect has been made possible by a generous \$150,000 TeamUp grant awarded by the Jim and Carol Trawick Foundation. This funding has had a tremendous and marked impact on the youth, families, BCMS, and greater East County communities. Students in the program, who were identified as high-risk for excessive absenteeism based on previous attendance records, resulting in low GPA’s, have had better attendance rates than their control peers (6.15 absences vs. 7.92), and scored themselves very high (from 89.5% to 100%) in response to questions around “putting effort into learning and understanding their academic subjects”, “having strengths and talents”, “knowing teachers and administrators”, and having “someone they can go to for help at BCMS”. Further, ECC participants scored themselves between 89.5% and 100% in “being a good teammate or partner”.

“A wonderful example of the progress made by these students is when a few of them (self-selected) refined and presented designs for a new sign for the Maydale Nature Conservation Center to the Montgomery County Department of Parks. In their presentations, students shared drawings that reflected the verbalized vision of the MC Parks and Maydale Naturalist staff, received constructive feedback, and then revised their design to better reflect the expressed vision of the “clients”. Elements of each of the participants’ original drawings became part of the final successful design which was a strategy suggested by one of the collaborating students and accepted by her peers”, noted Arts on the Block Deputy Director, Clayton Evans.

#

About Arts on the Block: Since its founding in 2003, AOB’s mission is to empower creative youth to imagine and shape fulfilling futures for themselves and contribute to the quality of life of their communities. We realize our mission by providing real-world experiences in the arts, arts education, and entrepreneurial training geared toward opening new pathways to learning, self-discovery, and achievement.