

THE MAGIC OF LEARNING THROUGH THE ARTS AT BALTIMORE LAB HIGH SCHOOL

Sally L. Smith, founder of Baltimore Lab School in 2000 for children with learning disabilities, knew that using art in all of its forms as a gateway for teaching academic skills would enhance learning. This philosophy continues to be the foundation for teaching and learning in our high school. Brain-based research has proven that the visual and performing arts promote the development of valuable neurological systems. The arts enhance the process of learning and capitalize on our students' creative strengths. The systems they nourish, which include our integrated sensory, attentional, cognitive, emotional, and motor capacities are the driving forces behind all other learning (Jensen, 2001). In the High School, the arts enhance the learning process and are integrated into curriculum and instruction in three distinct ways.

1. ART AS CURRICULUM

Baltimore Lab High School's discrete art courses help students explore art history, media, music, writing, movement, and artistic processes. High school students are required to take a fine arts and a physical education course and have the opportunity to take four courses in the Literary Arts or Visual Arts Pathway to help prepare them for possible careers in the arts and in communication. We offer discrete courses in: Art in the Theater, Art Seminar I and II, Design in Sculpture and Clay, Fine Arts, AP Studio Art: Digital Image Design Processing, Fundamentals of Art I, Photography I and II, Yearbook I and II, Foundations of Music Technology, Guitar, Music for Life, Music Theory and Composition, Journalism I, II and III, Technical Theater, Creative Writing, and Theater Arts I and II.

2. ARTS-ENHANCED CURRICULUM

The drama, music, English, Spanish, creative movement, physical education, and visual arts teachers collaborate with classroom teachers to develop songs, movement techniques, visual art experiences, writings, plays, videos, and poetry that help reinforce academic skills and enhance student acquisition of vocabulary and key concepts. Visual and performing art professionals work with all Baltimore Lab teaching professionals across all content areas and grade levels to use the arts to heighten student mastery of knowledge and skills.

Go to Page 2 to learn the 3rd way the arts enhance the learning process in our rigorous and innovative High School.

3. ARTS-INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

In the high school, teachers collaborate with each other and with the art professionals to provide curricular experiences for students in which an art form is used as an approach to teaching. In arts-integrated instruction, the art standard and the subject area content standard are taught and met within the same lesson.

Teachers infuse into every course Sally's philosophy of experiential classrooms where students are immersed in rigorous academic material through project-based learning, discovery, imagery, interaction, adventure, storytelling, movement, imagination, drama, travel, internships, exchanging ideas, connecting concepts, and creating memorable sensory experiences. In our high school, students find the joy of learning through the visual and performing arts and are connected in magical ways to each other, to learning, and to the real world.



“We do magic... magic with a very solid base of knowledge.”

- Sally Smith