

Chocachatti Elementary School Center for Fine Arts and MicroSociety®

Hernando County, Florida

Vision and Mission Statement

The Center for Fine Arts and MicroSociety is committed to providing a positive learning environment which integrates the creative abilities of children into the curriculum. Our mission is to provide children with learning experiences that will enable them to become productive members of society, of worth to themselves and others, by encouraging academic growth while developing aesthetic values in the creative and performing arts.

Chocachatti was designated as the first magnet school in Hernando County, Florida. The principal of this school had been a music teacher and knew that students who were exposed to the arts increased their standardized test scores. He wanted to utilize the arts as a highway to reinforce core learning. His research also showed that companies in the Fortune 500 list were complaining that students were not being prepared for the world of work. A quote from the SCANS report led him to search for a program that would combine the arts and preparing responsible individuals to enter the workplace. The quote “Good jobs will increasingly depend on people who can put knowledge to work,” led him to investigate *MicroSociety* as a way to integrate the two magnet focuses.

Our Results

Combining the arts theme into *MicroSociety* has been very successful for Chocachatti. We consistently maintain high test scores and have received an “A” rating from the Florida Department of Education for the last 10 years. We always have a waiting list of students who want to attend our school. Our attendance rate is 97% or better because students love coming to school and do not want to miss time “on the job.” Our volunteer hours are double or triple the numbers that other schools register.

How it Works

Students can apply for jobs in ventures such as: Chocachatti Extreme (steel drums), SLAM (like STOMP), Enchanting Strings (violin), Noisemakers (tap), Vocal Vibrations (a choral group), ROCK (a group that combines singing, a band and choreography), Hip Hop Shop (a dance group), Internationaal Dance (Spanish style dancing), Painting Funanza (oil painting), Sculpture, Musical Theater (singing, dancing, acting – Puts on a show at the end of the year like High School Musical, CATS etc), Pottery, Guitar, Keyboard Kids (portable keyboards), Percussion (drums), Famous Artists (learn about artists and recreate works like them), Royal Family, Inc. (drama), Historical Drama (plays that revolved around historical events), Kindergarten Chorus, Turtle Tunes (rhythm instruments and colored bells), Movers and Shakers (Kindergarten students learn simple dances such as the Hokey Pokey, The Chicken Dance etc).

When students are employed in the ventures listed above they learn about the real world of performing and selling their artwork. Musical Theater students work all year for one huge

performance. They need to set ticket prices so they make a profit. They hire other ventures to print programs, print tickets, run commercials on TV, run ads in the Micro newspaper, run the sound system etc. All of this has to factor in to the ticket price. Other performing groups base their budget on how many performances they will stage during the year. They can put on shows and sell tickets during Market Days. Both groups need to determine how much money will be spent on costumes, materials for props, decorations etc. They also realize that trying out for a job in a performing venture can be somewhat stressful. When they audition for Hip Hop Shop, they are given a number to pin on their shirt, learn a dance routine in a short time, and then perform that routine for the judges.

Artists realize the amount of time that goes into creating an original piece of artwork and find that they must price their work higher than many other products in the marketplace that take less time to create. Because some prices for original oil pieces or sculptures can run in the hundreds of Micro dollars, they sell chances or hold a silent auction. This allows them to learn about another form of selling and also introduces the customers to a different way of shopping.

Providing students with choices of fine arts jobs also gives some students an opportunity to shine. Many students are very creative, but do not excel academically. We saw self esteem rise when these students were successful in Micro and that success helped them to improve in the classroom as well. One special education student had a severe language deficiency. He had trouble following directions and did not do well academically. We found out that he had an innate talent for playing the drums. During one performance at a local high school, the high school girls were asking for his autograph. Wow! What a boost for that student.

Performing Arts ventures also allow schools to connect to the community and highlight and introduce their school to groups outside of the school. Performing groups can contact event coordinators and offer to perform at their function. When Sam's Club opened in our community, all of our performing groups provided the entertainment the day of the Grand Opening.

Visual Arts ventures can also provide services to the community. We started a "Rent Art" program. The art teacher would hang pictures in doctor's offices, business offices, hospitals etc. for \$3 a month per picture (real money). Volunteers changed the pictures halfway through the school year. Also a business could sponsor artwork to be hung in assisted living facilities, government offices etc. Information about their business would accompany the artwork.

Integrating Core Subjects

It is very easy to incorporate reading into arts ventures by having them learn about famous artists, dancers, singers, performers etc. Not only does this expose them to some of the people who succeeded, but it also shows them how many struggled to finally make it in their profession. Financial academy lessons are easily incorporated because employees have to create a budget, determine prices, wages etc. We also found that a few of our performing ventures learned the meaning of the term "starving artists." A few businesses applied for grants from the government. Businesses that would be very successful donated money for grants and the legislature reviewed applications and awarded funds. Businesses that applied for grants had to show how they would improve their financial worth in the future so they would not always seek government assistance. This led to some great business meetings!