

the Fabric of milwaukee



With a commitment to Peacemaking as a signature initiative, Arts @ Large is leading the way, inspiring students to build intercultural understanding, embrace leadership, and design artistic service-learning projects to promote positive change.

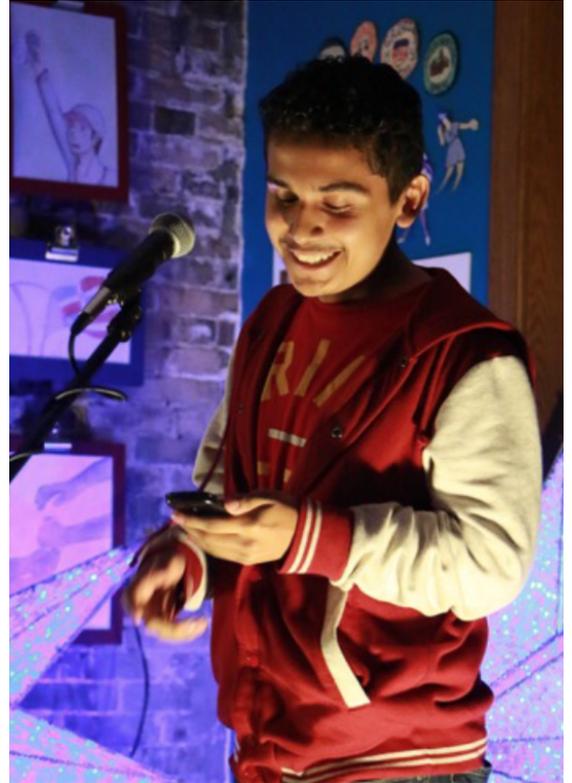
THE NEED - The Fabric of Milwaukee program arose from the needs of Milwaukee's growing immigrant/refugee student population within Milwaukee Public Schools. More than 7,000 English as a Second Language (ESL) students from 68 countries attend MPS.



2015-16 MPS Risk Behavior Statistics indicate that among Milwaukee's middle/high school students, only 41% almost always or often enjoy being at school; 40% report harassment/bullying as a problem; 23% report being bullied at school in past 12 months; and 36% feel so sad/hopeless almost every day for 2 weeks or more in a row that they stopped participating in their usual activities. The victimization of an adolescent can have serious consequences on school performance, physical and mental health. Through involvement in The Fabric of

Milwaukee, supportive environments are created, building students' feelings of engagement in school. Projects empower students to feel they can have an impact on climate/culture of their school, which is an essential ingredient to students feeling connected to their community.

EXISTING SERVICES - Of the 7,564 ESL students in MPS, the total number of refugees by age: 113 students 0-5 yrs; 821 students 6-14 yrs; and 444 students 15+ yrs. MPS translates documents into Spanish, Hmong, Arabic, Burmese, Somali and Karen. Additional common countries of origin include Puerto Rico, Thailand, Malaysia, Mexico, Burma, Iraq, Somalia, Tanzania, Kenya, Syria, Jordan, Honduras, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Sudan, India. Current services include: Bilingual & Multicultural Education, Bilingual Parent Services, First Nations Studies, Language Immersion, and the International Newcomer Center that provides “English language development and cultural support to newly arrived refugee and immigrant students in grades 5-9.” In addition to a strong team of ESL teachers, MPS has a dedicated ESL Manager, and Curriculum Specialist for Bilingual and Multicultural Education, as well as Immigrant Support teachers. Our program advisors at UW-Milwaukee’s Institute of World Affairs (IWA) describe the existing ESL team as “fantastic” but “stretched thin” - citing a need for deeper services and community connections to support the work. Anecdotal information suggests that many ESL students are mistakenly referred into Special Education because of a lack of knowledge of instructional strategies and interventions that work. This unfortunate reality can impact a student’s educational path for years to come, caused simply by a language or cultural barrier. The Fabric of Milwaukee program builds the skills of teachers through long-term support services, while helping students build academic confidence and competence through the arts.



THE SOLUTION - The Fabric of Milwaukee program is designed to: 1) Build Student Confidence, 2) Expand Student Cultural Awareness, and 3) Strengthen Student Connections, and assist youth who identify as immigrants or refugees to embrace their new environment without sacrificing their own cultural identity. Our strategic objectives are to: 1) Normalize fears while building intercultural understanding and leadership skills, 2) Provide opportunities to celebrate cultures, 3) Connect young immigrants and refugees with their peers and the greater community (providing networking opportunities that build a system of support, while giving them the skills to be an integral part of the community), 4) Offer opportunities to engage with mentors or models that have “been there,” and 5) Explore and practice a variety of artistic forms such as visual art, creative writing, dance, music, theatre and spoken word to communicate personal narratives.

The Fabric of Milwaukee builds the social-emotional skills of our immigrant and refugee students by focusing on self-awareness in tandem with ethnic and cultural awareness.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES & TIMELINE - Arts @ Large schools receive comprehensive services that include art and multimedia supplies to implement innovative student-driven projects, teacher and artist professional development, and research excursions to the multitude of museums, organizations and higher education partners we are fortunate to have in the Greater Milwaukee area. Over 8-16 weeks students interact with a group of artists, (almost all of whom have personally lived an immigrant or refugee experience), to explore Social Emotional Learning (SEL) topics through art, personal reflection, and facilitated small group discussion. Students then write their personal narratives through journaling, script writing, and spoken word experiences, or share their stories through performance and multimedia art, developing the skills and confidence necessary to share powerful narratives that build community and intercultural understanding.

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ALIGNMENT WITH COMMON CORE ARTS EDUCATION GOALS - The Fabric program engages students through interactions with bi-cultural artist educators, focusing on storytelling and personal narrative. Teachers are engaged through the arts on multiple levels, including professional development workshops, project planning with artist educators, and instructional coaching with Arts @ Large staff. Teachers assess student learning in and through the arts using grade appropriate National Core Arts Standards. **6th Grade** - ForCr1.2 Formulate artistic investigation of personally relevant content. **7th Grade** - RefCr3.1 Reflect on/explain information about work in artist statement/other format. **8th Grade** - AppCr3.1 Apply criteria to examine/reflect on and revise art/design in progress.

Artist Educators are supported through the program and given the unique opportunity to infuse their own cultural narrative and personal experiences as immigrants and refugees. Artist Saehee Chang describes her experience: *“I was born in Seoul, South Korea and came to this country at the age of 12. My mother and her family were refugees when they fled North Korea during the Korean War. I feel strongly about using my immigrant voice and perspective in my cultural and educational work as an artist and consultant - whether it is through Korean traditional drumming or Korean cooking programs.”*



(Left - A@L Intern Alondra Garcia & 2nd graders - Escuela Vieau School)

ABOUT THE ARTISTS - Arts @ Large's robust artist community is one of our greatest strengths. Many artists are bi-cultural and infuse personal immigrant or refugee stories throughout their artistic practice. Francis Annan Affotey (Visual Art & Dance - Ghana), Gilberto Botello (Visual Art - Mexico), Roberto & Malinally Franco (Dance - Mexico), and Saehee Chang (Music & Culinary Arts - Korea), to name just a few. Arts @ Large creates dynamic teams of artists who engage ESL students using arts integrated techniques to build understanding and storytelling skills. Learning topics include: The Big Move, Overcoming Trauma, Living your Heritage, Language & Oral Tradition, Embracing School Community, Exploring Identity/Self-worth/Race, and Writing Your Story.

KEY COMMUNITY PARTNERS - We have identified a number of key community organizations who already provide resources to and advocate for the rights of Milwaukee's immigrant and refugee communities. Many of these organizations, like the Milwaukee Muslim Women's Coalition, Voces De la Frontera, the Institute of World Affairs, America's Black Holocaust Museum, the Holocaust Education Resource Center, and the Jewish Museum of Milwaukee work tirelessly to bring about targeted and measurable social change around the ideas social and civic discrimination, and race-based misconceptions and phobias. These partners are committed to the Fabric of MKE, bringing their unique cultural lens, humanities experts, and educational resources to the table.

SUCCESS INDICATORS - We will know we are successful when students demonstrate greater confidence in the classroom, and report an increase in positive relationships between immigrant/refugee and non-immigrant/refugee students. We will see evidence of greater appreciation for the human condition and the reason for and impact of fear, strengthening understanding of cultural norms and their origins, and a deeper understanding of available resources. As a result of professional development, participating teachers will demonstrate a greater cultural understanding of immigrants and refugees, and build skills in SEL and arts-integrated curriculum design and implementation, resulting in increased student engagement and classroom management.

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