



The Importance of Arts Education: An Interview with Tom Matthews, Principal of Trowbridge Street Elementary School



You are helping promote the vitality of arts in schools! The arts are not a luxury; they are a crucial component to keeping kids engaged. Arts education would not be possible without your help, and without the help of Tom Matthews, principal of Trowbridge Street Elementary School.

Tom Matthews has worked in the Milwaukee Public School system for 31 years, and he has worked as the principal of Trowbridge for the past 11 years.

In addition to implementing crucial programs into the schools curriculum, he has dedicated his time to enriching students' learning experience through arts education.

"I discovered my voice when I was in sixth grade," said Matthews, "and it was my involvement in school productions and performing arts opportunities that allowed me to graduate high school, and ultimately find success."

Now, he in turn is igniting that passion in many students through arts-integrated programs at Trowbridge Street Elementary School.

When Matthews arrived at Trowbridge, there was no arts education, no physical education and no library. As an integrated MPS school in Bayview, Matthews has helped Trowbridge rebuild these programs, working to close the gaps in academic achievement, and encourage students to be, "self-confident, independent decision makers."



Trowbridge's outreach to arts groups in the community is astounding. Partnerships with UPAF Member and Affiliate groups include [First Stage Theater](#), [Florentine Opera Company](#), [Milwaukee Repertory Theater](#), [Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra](#), [Danceworks](#), [Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra](#), [Sharon Lynn Wilson Center for the Arts](#) and [Skylight Music Theatre](#).

Not only do these partnerships bring talented performers into the school, but they show students what the arts community in Milwaukee has to offer.

For example, the seventh and eighth grade classrooms at Trowbridge are reading and will get to see the Milwaukee Repertory Theater's production of *Our Town*. While visiting the set, the classes will get to see the pre-production set up, the show itself and the post-production tear down of the set in order to understand the different elements that go into a theatrical production. Post-instruction will also allow the students to reflect on the performance.

Support from MPS Superintendent Dr. Darienne Driver reiterates the importance of promoting arts education in schools. Her advocacy for arts education extends to the entire MPS system.

Milwaukee Public Schools are calling this year "The Year of the Arts." In light of this theme, they will be holding an MPS All-City Arts Festival Wednesday, May 9 - Friday, May 11, 2018. Trowbridge Elementary will be performing an African and Caribbean drum piece. The event is open to the public, so be sure to come to Henry Maier Festival Park to support the arts in Trowbridge, and the rest of Milwaukee's public schools.

It is people like Tom Matthews and Dr. Driver who remind us what kind of impact arts education can have on our students.

Thank you to all who make arts education in Milwaukee possible!

Check out this video of Trowbridge Street Elementary School's "Third Thursday" series, featuring the

Milwaukee Youth Symphony
Orchestra!



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