

Success Academy Education Incubator

at the **Robertson Center**

Vision of Excellence in the Scholar Talent Classroom

Our Vision

Specials and electives are a core element of the Success Academy school design. Success Academy strives to offer world-class scholar talent programs that engage and inspire all SA scholars while identifying and developing future university and professional-level artists and athletes.

We believe:

- all scholars have talents to be cultivated and it is our job to identify, inspire and develop them.
- all scholars have the right to experience magical arts and athletics programs.
- scholar talent programming is as sacred as reading and math.
- scholar talent programs can assist in improving academic and behavioral outcomes for scholars by providing struggling scholars opportunities to experience success in school.
- scholars become better readers, writers, mathematicians and human beings through the critical thinking, decision making, and confidence scholars gain through scholar talent programs.

Elements of a Successful Scholar Talent Program

Highly successful scholar talent programs require the engagement of and investment by all constituencies in the school community. Network and school leaders must prioritize the program and protect the vision. Parents must actively support and engage with programming, and teachers must develop a joyful classroom culture that leads scholars to reaching a high bar of excellence and mastery.

Leaders

Leaders are key levers in developing world-class scholar talent programs. In schools with high-quality scholar talent programs, leaders:

- create a culture that is permeated with scholar talent. Leaders take every opportunity to showcase scholar talent programs formally and informally at events throughout the year (community circle, performances at parent events, features in school newsletters, school-wide celebrations for scholar talent-related successes, etc.)
- invest in the development of their scholar talent teachers as heavily as they invest in the development of their classroom teachers.
- prioritize scholar talent programs when creating calendars and schedules to maximize scholar time with arts and athletics teachers and minimize schedule disruptions.
- make scholar talent programming a priority in their own schedules by taking time to visit and support weekend and after school scholar talent programming to see scholars engaging in their passions.

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- leverage the specific strengths of their scholar talent teachers throughout the school day by finding additional opportunities for them to engage with scholars in their content area.

Parents

No program can be successful without commitment from the parent community. Parents set priorities for their scholars and therefore heavily influence scholar engagement. Highly invested parents:

- Actively seek additional scholar talent programming opportunities for their scholars including participation in additional school and network groups and summer camps.
- ensure scholars are practicing, as necessary, outside school hours.
- attend all relevant scholar talent events.
- develop strong relationships with scholar talent teachers.

Teachers

Teachers are the biggest determinant of program quality. Teachers of high-quality scholar talent programs:

- believe that their program must be a magical experience for scholars and strive to create a class that scholars cannot wait to attend.
- believe that scholars learn by doing. Teacher talk is at a minimum and scholars spend the majority (approximately 80%) of their class time actively engaged in the content area.
- require scholars to stretch themselves and push their limits by pitching to their highest-fliers.
- continue to pursue their own development as an artist and athlete by taking classes/auditioning, creating art, competing and practicing at an adult-level.
- advocate fiercely for their program, both within and beyond the school community.

Characteristics of Effective Scholar Talent Classrooms:

1. **High levels of active engagement with the content.** Scholar talent classrooms are highly active (at times noisy!) classrooms. Effective teachers get scholars creating, engaging, moving and doing! Scholars must be creating, playing, moving at least 80% of the lesson.
2. **JOY takes center stage!** Joy is central to the scholar talent classroom and effective teachers make it a priority to cultivate this joy. An effective scholar talent class is a class that scholars excitedly line up to attend!
3. **Controlled chaos.** Scholar talent classrooms are often noisier and more active than a core content area classroom. This is normal and provides an important outlet for our scholars. However, all scholar talent classrooms must have clear expectations and structures to ensure that scholars are engaging in activities safely at all times.
4. **High level intellectual preparation by the adults.** An effective lesson provides multiple opportunities for scholar learning and must be carefully planned. Prior to teaching a lesson, teachers must:
 - a. Have a clear understanding of the specific learning expectations for their scholars and how and where these expectations fit into the larger unit or goal;
 - b. Consider the errors that scholars are likely to make and misconceptions that scholars are likely to have, and prepare strategies that address these errors and misconceptions; and
 - c. Identify how scholar mastery will be assessed.

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5. **Plan-teach-reflect-refine: Effective teachers are self-reflective.** Effective teachers replay their instruction, reflecting on what worked and what didn't, and analyze scholar responses and work as part of an ongoing cycle. Effective teachers do not do this in isolation. They work collaboratively with colleagues and school/network leaders to reflect on their teaching and make real time improvements.
6. **Effective teachers use student work and assessments to constantly refine instruction.** Effective teachers use tools like observations, student work, informal and formal assessments to monitor the quality of learning and make curricular and instructional modifications.