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## **Propel East Wins CLO Award for Excellence in Arts Education**

Propel East has received the prestigious Charles Gray Award from the Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera for excellence in arts education! The Charles Gray Award is made annually by the Pittsburgh CLO to an elementary, middle or secondary school in Allegheny County that has demonstrated a commitment to quality arts education for all students as a required part of the curriculum. The award honors Charles Gray, former executive director of CLO, whose special contribution to musical theater provided a model of quality arts education.

The Charles Gray Award Committee described Propel East's CreativeArts program as one of the top arts programs in Allegheny County, for reasons including:

- Arts are part of the curriculum every day for every child.
- Propel East has an enduring commitment to arts education.
- There are long (12 week) CreativeArts modules involving a diversity of arts organizations.
- The math, literacy and technology coaches are actively involved in supporting arts education.
- There is commendable parent and community involvement.

The Charles Gray Award was presented during the Gene Kelly Awards for Excellence in Musical Theater at the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts on Saturday, May 28. Propel East received a \$3,000 cash prize for arts programming in their school, an award plaque for display and a special assembly.

The arts program at Propel East engages students in interdisciplinary learning combining art history, art production, literacy, cultural studies, technology and civic responsibility. Studio 101 is the arts classroom, named to reinforce the values and practices of working artists and to help students understand the transformative power of the arts. The school's art teacher, Alison Babusci, maintains a blog ([www.propelstudio101.blogspot.com](http://www.propelstudio101.blogspot.com)) to extend activities beyond the classroom and to share artwork with students, parents, and colleagues. Ms. Babusci also established a school-wide arts festival featuring student artwork and musical performances, student-docents, student-curators, a student-artist market ARTSmart, and interactive art activities for all ages. Special events are planned throughout the year to bring artists together to celebrate and engage the community.

The music program at Propel East offers a wide-range of inclusive opportunities that allow students to experience music in-line with Pennsylvania and National Music Standards. Led by the school's music teacher, Anna Marie Joyce, the program utilizes interactive technologies to teach music theory, giving students an opportunity to create original compositions. Students learn the traditional song and dance, while having access to instrumental music lessons (led by Ross Cohen), band and string ensembles, and private voice lessons. Reading, writing, science and math is integrated into the music curriculum at all grade levels. Communication with families and community members about the school's unique music program is enhanced through Ms. Joyce's website (<http://www.mrsjoycesmusicclassroom.shutterfly.com>). Propel East's music program won the NAMM Foundation Award in 2010 recognizing the school as one of America's Best Communities for Music Education.

### **About Propel Schools CreativeArts Program**

The CreativeArts program is a central part of Propel's model. The program establishes and maintains relationships with partners from local fine and performing arts groups to offer discipline based modules in visual arts, music, theater, dance, sports, and recreation. Through these modules, partners or "Visiting Artists" supplement and support the ongoing use of creative expression in the classroom as students delve further into a variety of different forms of personal expression and activity. The Visiting Artists are in residence all day, every day, for 6-12 week modules. All students have one hour a day (190 hours a year) of fine and performing arts. Propel's CreativeArts partners include; the Civic Light Opera, Stage Right Theater, Dance Alloy Theater, Pennsylvania Shotokan Karate Club, First Tee of Pittsburgh, Staycee Pearl Dance Project, Hip Hop on L.O.C.K., Pittsburgh Musical Theater, Studio J, Saturday Light Brigade, WYEP and more.

"CreativeArts classes at Propel Schools are planting seeds in students to develop an appreciation and understanding of the arts, and to discover their own special talents," said Laura Ferguson, CreativeArts Director, Propel Schools. "The program has become a core element at all of our Propel schools."