



Caldwell Arts Academy  
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## Overview and Background

Caldwell Arts Academy is a kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade Fine Arts magnet school in Tyler ISD. Established in 2001, our historic facility downtown opened as a kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade school within a school model that offered extra fine arts electives in drama and dance. In 2015, our campus began the shift to becoming a full magnet program for kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade that requires potential students to apply and audition for enrollment. This allowed us to expand our elementary offerings to separate music courses for instruments and vocals, digital arts, drama, dance, and visual arts. In addition, our campus increased middle school courses, offering 24 arts electives that allow students to dive into very enriched arts experiences such as animation and film, photography, mariachi ensembles, dance specialties like ballet, jazz and hip-hop, 3D art and tech theater, to name a few.

Caldwell Arts Academy has approximately 580 students and a staff of 45 that helps support the development of our programming. 52% of our students are economically disadvantaged, 10% special populations like special education and dyslexia, and 19% gifted and talented. Our sub populations include 43% Hispanic, 32% Caucasian and 22% African Americans.

With a vision “*to be the state's premier Fine Arts Academy that advances a creative and applied approach to teaching and the arts*”, our campus work involves creating systems that sustain an advanced culture of collaboration, problem solving, adaptation, and cohesion. This effort has supported our growth to become a “B” rated campus with four TEA distinctions prior to COVID. In addition, we are recognized as an Arts Integration School Award recipient by the National Arts School Network. This award demonstrates a strong commitment to academics and the arts. Lastly, we are working on our High Reliability School Level 1.

## Transformation Target: New Learning Standards through the Arts

Caldwell Arts Academy has been a dedicated arts integration school for over a decade. As a Kennedy Center Education Partner with Young Audience of Northeast Texas, our program has evolved into a leader in the development, presentation, and support of growing arts integration in East Texas. In the early beginnings, Caldwell focused on the classroom culture and teacher professional development to ensure that our mission, enhancing the whole child through the arts, was a commitment at the foundational level. This began with establishing Acting Right practices that provided classroom management strategies that supported instruction and student focus on self. By building a cooperative, collaborative, and creative classroom community, students were prepared for diverse lessons in arts integration.

Next, Caldwell committed to bringing teaching artists and master teachers to support our student’s art development in both Core and Arts classrooms. With teaching artists, we have brought experiences to both develop our staff and demonstrate lessons with our students. These experiences range in content and art forms that have collectively allowed over 100 arts integration opportunities for our learning community. Also, part of our integration strategies school-wide is bringing master artists to work with our students in advanced mediums. Starting with visual arts, students were able to participate in classes like advanced printmaking, sculpture, and cyanotype photography.

With building our mission, *enhancing the whole child through the arts*, our campus furthered our leadership in arts integration by developing our strategies into an extended professional development experience for local teachers. Hosting an arts integration conference allowed our faculty to present their archived lessons in a variety of contents and art styles to show how arts integration can be utilized as a true pedagogical practice in any classroom. Since

this conference was a part of a wider district professional development initiative, our campus was able to highlight the amazing instructional environment to a wider audience.

### **Transformation Target: Accountability of Learning through PLC**

Caldwell has developed a robust professional learning community, PLC, that supports our academic progress, develops innovative instructional practices, embraces data driven decisions and utilizes collegial dialogue for cohesive change. This process starts every week with a specially curated agenda that personalizes the experience for each team through scheduled topics and standard practice. For instance, Monday is our data discussion day that takes formative assessment data from an adaptive data tracker and targets how instruction will be personalized by teachers to meet student mastery goals. This then carries into our student artifacts day that evaluates how well students are retrieving knowledge from the lessons and apply it to their practice in stations, activities, and creative experience like arts integration. This then drives their next two planning PLC days and culminates to teacher led PLC on Friday. These PLC moments are our way to invest in teacher leaders and have them collectively demonstrate their mastery of practice with peers.

This PLC system has helped our campus take many advanced educational pedagogies and put them into practice. For instance, our classrooms are built around using depth and complexity as a core strategy to facilitate students to ask deep questions and make connections at an enriched level. As an arts magnet school, many of our students have strong gifts and talents that need many diverse outlets to demonstrate their learning. Depth and Complexity has supported our efforts to help push students to understand their content at the levels of rigor demanded by assessment, but also make broad content connections across disciplines. Our campus has grown academically with this shift and our student engagement has increased because we make learning more relevant to their future.

### **Transformation Target: Organization Transformation through Culture and Programming**

Caldwell Arts Academy is committed to building a community of artists that build collaboration, cohesion, and relationships. To achieve this, we have built a house system that places all students and staff in a unique house in which they can earn points toward winning the coveted House Cup. The six houses with their character traits for elementary feed into three houses with character traits for middle school. Each house has a constellation, character trait, color, emblem, and is a mixture of grade levels. New students are sorted at our big house reveal at the start of every year.

In addition, Students are celebrated weekly for their achievements through our House Heroes award and each nine weeks a top house is named, and their flag is hung outside the school for pride. Also, parents are a part of a house committee that helps plan and celebrate students every nine weeks. As a magnet school without a zone, our families come from all over the Tyler area to attend. The houses give parents a chance to meet diverse families and connect at these parties through fun games and celebrations. All houses participate, but the top house gets a little extra bonus such as a dance party, ice cream social, food truck, etc. The main goal is connected students, staff, and families to a bigger vision of our unique arts program.

Another vital way our school is transforming education is through our diverse and unique arts curriculum designed for our students. With advanced arts offerings that build every year toward targeted arts experience for middle school, our students are provided chances to advance their art forms in ways that no other school does at the grade levels we offer. For instance, students can learn skills in elementary that many students wouldn't see till high school. An example of this is with our recognized dance program in which 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders are in specialty dance classes that prepare them in multiple disciplines of dance for our culminating dance program in the spring in front of an audience of over a thousand people in our school auditorium. This high-level production and programming prepare them to grow in our middle school towards advancing beyond basic high school classes in the arts as 9<sup>th</sup> graders. In fact, students can receive high school credit in Theatre 1 and Art 1 at our campus. This was a first in our district and is reserved for our students.

These examples of our house system and specialized programming demonstrate our campus commitment to creative and innovative approaches in fulfilling our organizational vision to transform education in our community.