“We are the story!”
— Kindergarten Student

Building Early Literacy Through Drama

For more information:
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The Alliance Theatre for Educators and Teaching Artists

GEORGIA WOLF TRAP

Georgia Wolf Trap is the kindergarten component of the Alliance Theatre and Georgia State University to create curriculum that supported the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) in Language Arts through the use of drama. The project was funded through a United States Department of Education Arts Education Model Program Grant. The Georgia Wolf Trap program placed professional theatre artists in fourteen schools including storytelling with objects, teacher-in-role, and story dramatization. Workshops included the following:

- Professional Learning for Teachers
- Five shared planning sessions in which the artist and teacher evaluate completed lessons and plan future lessons
- Field trip to a play at the Alliance Theatre to the play the students experience on their field trip
- Thirteen forty-five minute classroom sessions in which the artist models teaching approaches
- Three- Day Wolf Trap Summer Seminar (3 PLUs)
- Video and photo documentation
- Program evaluations by teachers and artists
- Georgia Wolf Trap workshop

The “achievement gap” begins before the child’s first day of school. Students from low-income backgrounds begin Kindergarten with less than half the vocabulary of their high-income counterparts. Although recent studies link arts-based learning activities to literacy and language development, a recent research-based study by Georgia Wolf Trap evaluated the impact of arts strategies with teachers and students twice weekly. The researchers found that participation in the Georgia Wolf Trap program resulted in significantly higher scores on standardized achievement tests.

The Wolf Trap project over time. Students classified as having special needs showed an even greater benefit from Wolf Trap participation in first grade compared to students who attended control schools during Kindergarten. Students who participated in the Wolf Trap program resulted in significantly greater improvement in grammar development and in quantitative and qualitative measures of writing during their Kindergarten year. In subsequent years and without further intervention, children who participated in the Georgia Wolf Trap program maintained greater scores on standardized achievement tests.

For students with special needs, early and developmentally appropriate interventions such as the Georgia Wolf Trap Project can generate lasting benefits. Early and developmentally appropriate interventions can help children with special needs as part of the foundation for all future learning. The research project involved 21 schools and 1200 students over three years.

Fulton County Schools participating in the research study included the following:

- Harper Elementary School
- Hatcher-Tomasek Elementary School
- Laurel Elementary School
- 88th Street Elementary School

The Georgia Wolf Trap program served 27 teachers and 1200 students in meaningful and comprehensive ways to increase student learning and social/emotional literacy. Drama provided powerful teaching approaches in meaningful and comprehensive ways to increase student learning and social/emotional literacy. Drama provided powerful teaching approaches in understanding of events and emotion. Their enactment of stories together, to express meaning in this new context, improving their adaptation to

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The long-lasting benefit of the intervention on the academic achievement of the students is especially important because the intervention was broad and comparatively inexpensive. Early and developmentally appropriate interventions such as the Georgia Wolf Trap Project can generate lasting benefits to their school and enhance opportunities for success.