

# Leading the way

## Meet Kate Wright

Art teacher at Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST) and City School District of Albany Art Department Chair

Kate Wright always knew she was artistic. Once a designer for local fashion company Ursula of Switzerland, she continued to search for creative opportunities. Art education was a perfect fit. She began teaching at Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST) in 2003, where she continues to teach today. In 2012, she became chair of the Art Department for the City School District of Albany in addition to her teaching role at TOAST. As the district-wide chair, she advocates for and supports art programs, creating new opportunities through community partnerships.

**Q: School art is much more than crayons and construction paper. Tell us about that.**

**A:** School art gives kids the opportunity to learn the principles and elements of art and design, and the opportunity to discover their creativity and skills through problem-solving and cultural appreciation. School art also lets kids pursue social justice causes that affect the human condition in their community and throughout the world. The arts are a natural way for people to connect with each other and form strong alliances.

**Q: How does art fit with education standards that emphasize the need to improve literacy in our schools?**

**A:** Art is the glue that ties all other subjects together. Not all students are going to naturally click in with all of their core subjects, but project-based learning through the arts, using visual and hands-on learning, allows struggling students to better comprehend new ideas. In an increasingly visual world, with the explosion of technology and the Internet, fast processing of information through visual literacy is now required.

**Q: What role does art play in a world increasingly driven by science and technology?**

**A:** Although many schools concentrate on a science-technology-engineering-math (STEM) curriculum, our focus is to be inclusive of the arts. So we have science-technology-engineering-art-math, or "STEAM." Without art, it would be impossible to communicate scientific concepts through visual understanding. Integration of the arts into all subjects deepens the learning and encourages critical thinking, risk taking and collaboration.

Media arts careers are one of the fastest growing career sectors right now. Fundamental knowledge of anatomy through observational drawing and sculpting, having the ability to understand perspective, diagrams and graphs – all this assists video game designers, scientists and engineers.

**Q: What makes a painting, sculpture or other creative expression a work of art?**

**A:** All creative expressions are works of art to me and all forms of creative expression are valid regardless of my personal taste. Each artwork serves a purpose and can influence one person or the entire world. What separates them is the amount of skill, the medium, subject, ideas and publicity that go into each one. Throughout history the most famous artists left their mark on the world long before the world was ready to understand and appreciate it.

