



**Public Media**  
Issues & Voices that Matter

**Commentary  
for the February 14, 2011  
edition of *Central Florida Matters***

**by Eric Geboff, executive director of the Foundation for Seminole County Schools**

Word Count (538 words)

The Foundation for Seminole County Public Schools is proud to support the School Districts' focus on Academics, Arts and Athletics – better known as the “Triple A Experience.”

The School Board believes that instruction in the fine and performing arts in our schools helps to develop the whole student, while research has shown that students who participate in music and arts programs develop skills that help them excel in their studies. And unlike many other school districts, all of Seminole County Public Schools have certified music and art teachers on staff. The School Board is committed to making this a priority for our students. The Foundation takes its lead from the School Board. We recently announced the results of our signature fundraising event – Arts Alive in Seminole!

More than \$100,000 dollars was raised at the event through the support of our generous supporters and nearly \$900,000 dollars has been raised since its inception. The event showcases the talent of our students and staff through a visual arts gallery and live performances. The funds benefit the arts programs in every school in the district in a variety of ways – through the purchase of musical instruments, art supplies, sheet music, as well as sponsorship of choral and band festivals, and drama and dance competitions.

The support that the schools receive from Arts Alive really makes a difference. Melissa Swedberg, the music teacher at Walker Elementary, told us that with the funds their school received she was able to purchase more musical instruments so that every child in her class would be able to participate.

The funds also provide for art awards. Each year, Heathrow Elementary School's art teacher, Susan Peace, has her students create a large-scale diorama in the art room. With a grant received from The Foundation, her students were able to create “Monet's Garden.” They researched the artist, Claude Monet, and recreated his world by painting a replica of his home, creating a water lily pond and building a small bridge. The students then acted as art docents during an open house, leading guests through the diorama and sharing what they learned about the artist and his life in France.

Sherry Peters, art teacher at Winter Springs High School, also received an arts grant. The award allows her students to visit a bronze foundry and learn the basics of bronze casting. The students chose to create and cast a small bronze sculpture representing Seminole County's “Triple A Experience”: Academics, Arts and Athletics, and it's now on display in the District Office lobby.

The variety of fine art experiences available to our students is incredible, whether it's Chorus, Drama, Band, Orchestra, Visual Arts or Dance, Photography and digital arts - and it all begins in our elementary schools.

Arts education gives our students opportunities to express themselves, to reach and grow beyond what they might imagine and to help them become well-rounded members of our community. If you visit our schools you'll see that the arts are alive for our students, expanding their view of the world and ultimately improving their lives and their community.

I am Eric Geboff, executive director of the Foundation for Seminole County Public Schools, and support of arts education in our public schools really matters.

GeboffE\_com.doc