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# MASCARTS

Moroccan American Schools Council for the Arts

Promoting the Arts through collaboration,  
professional networking, and  
community outreach.

## Problem

Beginning in 1950 and continuing today at an exponentially growing rate, Morocco has welcomed International schools based on American curriculum for Moroccan students as well as foreign nationals living in Morocco. Currently, according to the United States Embassy, there are over five State Department Sponsored American Schools, not including three accredited American Schools who participate in MASAC, the Moroccan American Schools Athletic Association, and one newly established (2012) international school in Casablanca. This totals nine American or International Schools providing American curriculum to students ranging in age from 3 to 18 years of age located in Casablanca, Fes, Rabat, Ifrane, and Marrakech. This proposal poses the following question to those educators working at these nine International schools; Why have we continued for sixty-three years to be independent entities, rather than join in collaboration and development efforts for the common purpose of education and community outreach in order to make a positive difference for our students?

## Proposal

As the sole art teacher at American Academy Casablanca, I am proposing the development of MASCARTs, the Moroccan American Schools' Council for the Arts. Olivia Gude (2009) describes the arts as, "an avenue through which youth and communities experience their power to make things and to make things happen (p.6). Through MASCARTs, visual and performing art educators would be able to collaborate, plan, share, and develop together to generate change and demonstrate the power to make things happen, rather than stay isolated and confined to their art or music rooms, contributing to the stale notion that artists are autonomous, and the ultimate expression of individualism (Campana, 2011). Instead, MASCARTs would focus on three areas; collaboration, professional networking, and community outreach; all proven to contribute to the success and development of art education curricula in today's changing and developing world.

As teachers in International schools, we are teaching to a diverse group of students from all over the world. Research suggests that collaborative teaching and learning are beneficial to teachers and students, and contribute to an increased cultural awareness and understanding within the group (May, 1994, Stuhr, et. al, 1992, Riley, 2011, Marche, 1998). Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwaniki, and Wasson (1992) state, "An effective teaching/learning environment is a collaborative, democratic one in which cross cultural and intercultural interactions can be analyzed and negotiated" (p.18). MASCARTs encourages dialogue and collaboration across arts disciplines, among students located at different schools, and Arts educators. Through this collaboration

among an intercultural and multicultural group of artists, students, and educators, “they are more able to develop a broader range of cultural perspectives from which to view their world” (Stuhr, et. al, 1992).

Educators need one another in order to learn, grow, adjust, and develop, especially when they are in a foreign nation, teaching foreign students, and adjusting to a foreign culture. Professional networks, communities and relationships are vital to the growth and success of teachers and developing curricula (May, 1994). Wanda May (1994) States, “I am very concerned about art educators' voice, place, identity, and sense of human agency in institutional structures that often restrict and isolate us, rather than bind us together in supportive, proactive, professional communities (p. 135). MASCArts requires visual and performing arts educators to create a professional network among themselves and the community with the common purpose of professional development, inquiry, and growth. Sharing lesson plans, questions, photos, performance calendars and schedules, student work, and meeting as a group all contribute to creating a professional networking community based on collaboration and problem solving. Together, we can, “benefit both the individual and the group” (May, 1994, p.145).

The Moroccan community and culture in which our students live is vastly different than American communities in which we as American educators are taught in university to penetrate. Language barriers, cultural differences, and fears of immersion all overwhelm myself as an educator when I think of community outreach and support. Nevertheless, F. Graeme Chalmers (1974) states, "The community is the primary association about which the integration of art activities and democratic goals should be organized" (as cited in Campana, 2011, p 279). Bastos (2006) further advocates for community outreach through dialogical inquiry, stating, “dialogical inquiry is based on the relatively simple but powerful premise that talking to one another can foster cultural understanding” (p.21). Through dialogue and interaction with the community, arts educators are teaching students critical participation, where students and teachers learn to participate and construct change in an ever-changing world (Bastos, 2006, Gude, 2009). MASCArts would encourage and allow arts educators, who would initially be intimidated by community outreach and support, to break the barriers separating the American School and the community together, as a professional network of collaborators, with their students.

Through MASCArts, Arts Educators are not only providing a collaborative, networking community for ourselves, but also for our students. Fullan (1993) states, “It is important that students also develop a sense of community, based upon habits and skills of collaboration” (as cited in Marche, 1998, p. 10). Participation in MASCArts exemplifies how we are trying to teach our students to tackle the world around them. Wanda May (1989) reveals increased isolation and lack of professional dialogue among art specialists, contributing to lack

of professional knowledge. She attributes this to “few opportunities they have to interact, to compare what they know, and to develop a professional language” (p.147). The Moroccan American School Council for the Arts promotes professional development, dialogue and inquiry, encourages teacher and student collaboration, and provides opportunities to break community and cultural barriers. MASCARTS provides individual and collective growth on all levels, so let’s start the dialogue.

## Action Plan

### Step 1:

Contact and establish professional relationships with Art Department heads and teachers at the following locally based schools, determine interest, and begin discussing possibilities of the proposal. Contacts located in Appendix.

### Step 2:

Organize first meeting to be held in by a teacher interested in pursuing the council. This meeting should discuss:

- Introduction and uses for the website, [www.mascarts.weebly.com](http://www.mascarts.weebly.com)
- Ideas for goals and purposes of MASCARTS.
- Possible future networking contacts including the American School of Marrakech, International School of Morocco, The American School of Tangier, Villa des Arts Casablanca, Villa des Arts Rabat, Le Studio des Arts Vivants.
- Promotion
- Meeting schedule.

### Step 3:

Website development and production- Interested Members should begin input, uploading photos, lesson plans, announcements, interdisciplinary ideas, upcoming events etc to the MASCARTS website.

### Step 4:

Members should organize Monthly meetings to collaborate, discuss, and establish a professional network of Performing and Visual Arts Educators.

Step 5:

Members should begin discussing possible community outreach and expansion. Members should begin discussion, proposal, and action plan for a MASCARTS Visual and Performing Arts Exhibition or Fair located within the community of Casablanca, Rabat or both. The Exhibition would showcase projects, musical performances, and dramatic acts from students throughout the year. Possible Venues include: Villa des Arts, Casablanca, Villa des Arts, Rabat, or the Culture Factory, Casablanca.

## Appendix

**Possible Contacts for MASCARTS Membership and establishment:**

**\*On the public website, names are blackened due to privacy and security reasons.**

**Casablanca American School:**

█; US/IB Art – Dept Chair  
 █; US Music  
 █; US IB Theater  
 █; LS Art

**George Washington Academy:**

█; Elementary Music  
 █; Elementary Art  
 █; Elementary/Kindergarten Art  
 █; HS Art, Yearbook  
 █; HS Theatre  
 █; MS Music, Band

**Rabat American School:**

█; IB Art

**American Academy Casablanca**

█; ES/HS Art  
 █; HS Yearbook  
 █; ES Music  
 █; HS Theatre

## References

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