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WEXNER CENTER WRITES NEW CHAPTER IN TEEN EDUCATION: *PAGES*

INNOVATIVE WRITING PROGRAM FOSTERS LITERACY THROUGH ENGAGEMENT WITH THE CONTEMPORARY ARTS

This fall, the Wexner Center launches *Pages*, a new yearlong program for area high school students that fosters writing skills through the exploration of contemporary visual arts, performing arts, and film. In this pioneering program, more than 200 students from high schools around the city will discuss and express in writing their observations, thoughts, and opinions on various contemporary art experiences at the Wexner Center. Supported through a gift from JPMorgan Chase & Co, *Pages* gives students the opportunity to develop the analytical and writing skills necessary to “read” and interpret art and visual imagery. Integrated into the school curricula, this program also helps teachers meet state standards for visual arts education, writing, and literacy.

During the 2006–2007 school year, *Pages* will be fully implemented in partnership with a diverse range of urban and suburban high schools and programs in Central Ohio: **Africentric Early College**, a Columbus Public School; **New Albany High School**; **The Wellington School** (a college preparatory school); the **Christopher Program** (serving 16 school districts across Franklin County); and the new **Metro School**, a high school opening this fall focused on science and technology (with liberal arts as part of its curriculum as well), created through a partnership among Battelle, The Education Council, and The Ohio State University.

Notes Wexner Center Director Sherri Geldin, “*Pages* underscores the Wexner Center’s commitment to providing stimulating cross-disciplinary programs for students—especially teens—that encourage creative literacy while also advancing academic proficiency in core curricular areas. We believe the arts provide a prismatic lens through which to look at a wide range of subjects from math to science to technology to literature. And we are very gratified to have enlisted such a diverse array of school partners in this initiative.”

Pages was created by Wexner Center educator Dionne Custer, herself a writer and performance artist. “Young people need multiple ways of engaging with the world, finding new and dynamic inspiration for their own literary expression,” Custer says. “*Pages* is also especially vital at a time when arts programs are being cut in many schools across Ohio.” During *Pages*, students will work with both Custer and award-winning local writer Nancy Kangas at the Wexner Center and in their classrooms.

During the first visit to the Wexner Center, students will experience, discuss, and write about a multimedia performing arts piece by Ohio State graduate student Boris Willis, in partnership with the OSU dance department. The second visit will focus on a tour of one of the Wexner Center’s current exhibitions, and the third will involve a screening of the Cannes award-winning French film *The Son*, by filmmakers Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne.

A few elements that make *Pages* unique:

- **Students explore the contemporary arts on their own terms**, discussing and responding in writing to their experiences at the center.
- **Multiple visits:** Students receive a visit in their classroom before and after each of their visits to the Wexner Center. Students receive research materials and teachers receive resource packets for teaching.
- **Multiple writing opportunities and multiple arts disciplines:** Students experience three different art forms and respond in three different styles of writing.
- **Activities address state standards** in visual arts education, writing, and literacy in a creative and contemporary fashion.
- **Students learn to “read” images** as they would written text—developing the translatable skill of “visual reading” which can transfer to other disciplines.

The pilot

Pages was piloted last year through a partnership with the Africentric Early College (formerly Africentric Secondary School), a Columbus Public high school. Over the course of one semester, 50 students experienced multiple artistic disciplines: students toured the exhibition *Part Object Part Sculpture*; watched the documentary film *African American* and engaged in a dialogue with the director; and participated in a hands-on performing arts studio activity with carnival art theater artists from London, England (an event organized in partnership with Ohio State’s Department of Theatre). Participating teacher Rebekah Reeves commented that “in the *Pages* project, many of my students were exposed to the ‘world’ of visual art for the first time....It’s one of the most valuable programs that Columbus Public Schools could have right now,” she wrote, adding, “Many of my students have composed pieces of writing that will reflect its excellence.”

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