



TRANSCRIPT

Red Lake Middle School celebrated all the progress they've made over the past year with a special award ceremony and a very special guest. Red Lake Middle School has been on a positive path. They have seen declines in both student referrals and suspensions and increases in enrollment and attendance. To celebrate, Grammy Award winning DJ, DJ Iz paid a visit to the school as part of the Turnaround Arts Program. Turnaround Arts promotes positive progress in schools with the help of art.

It's a honor and blessing for me to come out here and visit Red Lake. And kind of just see the culture and the arts and how the kids are thriving. And, you know, one thing that I love about what we do at Turnaround Arts is, for me, it's not so much about a program, but more or less it's about the human element in how we connect to our kids in the classroom. Through arts, through music, and just through creativity and imagination.

I'm DJ, one half of the Avila Brothers, Turnaround artists. Man, my introduction to music and it becoming a part of my DNA was really through my father, who was a keyboard player and him and his band would constantly rehearse at the house in the garage and mine and my brother's room was right next to the garage. So in the midst of trying to sleep for the school day, you know, the next ... tomorrow morning, you know, it was just this noise going on and we really couldn't get no sleep. And so I remember my dad would pull us into the garage and I go sit by the drummer. For some reason, even at an early age, I was always intrigued by the groove and the drums and the beat and my brother would go hang out with the piano player. And that's kind of where I discovered my love for music and drums.

It was like what video games are the kids now, like instruments and music was that to me and my brother at that time as being kids. I remember, you know, we would definitely, you know, go out in the street and play football the whole nine, but for the most part, it's like we were on our instruments and just jamming and you know, not really having a template. You know, at that time we learned off of just by ear, you know, not so much being in front of a book and reading. And I think just experiencing that natural excitement and love for music just kind of just became a part of who we were even as kids and allowed us to kind of just pursue that and embrace that evolution of what it was going to become in our lives.



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And then you look at, you know, a school like Finley in Des Moines where arts is part of that everyday experience and these kids are our anxious to perform and showcase and talk about their ideas and their concepts and they're all working together and the energy of the building and how can we focus our target within that need.

And you know, what was, what was really unique to me and what really stood out to me today about Finley was the student who got to pretty much explain this circle they've carved out that has allowed them to have the freedom of creativity, the freedom of thought, the freedom of mistakes, how those mistakes are gauged and what does that mean? The fact that they've, in their minds, have developed at this space that they collectively join in on and share and it's almost like a shield that protects them from, you know, discouragement, you know, anything negative or any of those different components that as humans can be come serious distractions for us.

And the fact that they're empowering one another. They're bouncing ideas off of each other. They're formulating poems, words, music. They're rapping. They're rhyming. They've embraced it. Just this experience that I remember we call it my childhood was a form of, you know, it was almost like a form of a vigilante component, which was hip-hop. And the fact that you see this integrated into what they're doing and they're all excited. The adults in the classroom were excited. I mean, that's, to me was mind blowing.

Yeah. I think there's a lot to be said about mistakes. I mean, when you look at our history as far as those that have come before us and had been able to do great things and impact abroad, there's a bigger list of mistakes they made versus the wins they had and I think it's important for us to implement that into these young minds and culture of today that, you know, in order to become an expert or next and have a form of expertise, you don't, that doesn't just fall in your lap.

No, and it's okay for kids to make mistakes. Like I said today, it's one thing to make mistakes. You keep making mistakes, you get better and you're better, but it's another thing to practice mistakes. And I think if we can empower our children's, their minds in the way of thinking that the only way for me to perfect and really properly curate what it is I love.



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I've got to be allocated a room, a space that allows me to make mistakes. And that's okay. You know, it's almost like how I view A's, B's, C's, D's, E's, or and F's. You know, grades are cool, but that shouldn't govern the potential of what this student can possibly do in life or become and it's okay to make mistakes. I mean, I've gotten, you know, to a level, even in my creativity and space where, you know, I wouldn't be where I'm at today. I wouldn't be having this interview with you had my record looked extremely flawless. I got here through trial and error making mistakes. So now that I'm done and I've given you my spiel, I want you to hear from our educators in Broward County.

**Tammy Holder:**

Art encompasses all aspects of education as math, as social studies, as history, as language with a soul.

**Cicily Collins:**

It's a big connection between the academics and the learning and comprehension that goes on.

**Tammy Holder:**

As a way to give voice to students' feelings. It gives voice to their creativity and it helps them become individuals by being able to express themselves artistically, creatively, rather just you know, two plus two is four and you just go along with the road learning things that you learn. When a child is given that opportunity to be artistic, I think it helps them turn into who they're supposed to be.

**Sharon Boyd:**

The Turnaround Arts provided education for the teachers on how to integrate art strategies into all facets of learning.

**Cicily Collins:**

I'll try to pull in things about math and reading.

**Claudia L.:**

When I'm doing rhythm patterns, how can I do this with math? Well, everything is times three years or is it times four.





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In other words, you know, this is the kind of growth that we want to see when students become engaged because they want to be engaged and art has the capacity to do that.

Sharon Boyd:

It's authentic engagement and it's not just, "Oh, I want to participate in this game or this art project," but "I want to do something because I truly understand what I just learned and I want to show you this through a play, through a poem."

Sharon Boyd:

We've had students express things that are going on at home through their artwork and they'll draw things in their journals or they'll write poems based on struggles that they're having at home and through that we can reach and help them. So the arts opened up an avenue that sometimes we might not be able to reach and go with the students. The behavior has improved. Our referral rates have gone down drastically over the past two years because of the student engagement in the arts.

Tammy Holder:

The obvious thing is they're learning musical theater skills. They're learning how to sing. They're learning how to dance. They're learning how to project their voice. They're learning how to create a character. But beyond that they're learning language skills. They're learning social skills. They're learning how to work as a team, as an ensemble. It's improving their own personal self-esteem.

Tammy Holder:

Half the battle in getting a kid to do something is making them believe that can, and what I'm doing is trying to instill in them a confidence and to instill in them just the tools, you know, this ... "You need to be loud" or "This is how you do it" and, you know, you're learning musical theater skills, but they're also, it's making them feel more confident and I think that's my biggest job right now. It's up to them to memorize their lines and you know, I can tell them where to stand, but also I think one of my important jobs now is to really, as we get closer to the show, make them feel confident and make them feel empowered and make them feel ready to, that they can do this show.

Cicily Collins:



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I think it's going to be a really big deal for them. I think they're going to look back and remember when they were part of this big musical and they had an amazing famous artists who came to visit their school and mentor them. I think it's going to be a really big, like life changing event for them. I think that for some of them, this is opening doors and opening their eyes to a bigger world. They've already been to the Broward Performing Arts Center.

Tammy Holder:

I think that's such a unique experience that not everybody gets to experience in their lifetime.

Claudia L.:

I never thought in my life I would have my students perform at the Broward Performing Arts Center, like it ... I'm not going to forget it. So for them it's huge.

Tammy Holder:

Then they're going to get to walk on the stage here at the Broward Center in the amateur theater and they're going to be a star, and I hope that that moment and that feeling of being so magnificent in and even if they're the, you know, fourth sea creature from the right, they're part of something really big and something that they've been really excited about. And I hope that years from now they can look back on this experience and feel good about themselves.