

CITIZEN ARTIST

Citizen Artist is a 6-credit course (offered under THFM 490) taught by theatre faculty Kate Collins.

Through this project-based, service-learning course, BGSU partnered with Libbey High School, a diverse urban high school in the south side of Toledo in the Toledo Public School District, giving students (both in high school and college) an intensive opportunity to explore the significant ways in which art can enrich civic life in America. BGSU students explored theory and pedagogy in relation to arts-based civic engagement and service-learning, and studied methods of using drama in a social studies classroom.

This spring, the Citizen Artist project focused on the challenging and timely question: Should community service be a requirement of high school graduation? BGSU and Libbey students worked together to research the complexities of the topic through story circles, surveys with community members, and discussions with guest speakers. There were also two all-day fieldtrips where the Libbey students came to the BGSU campus for intensive rehearsal and planning sessions that gave the high school juniors time to tour the BG campus and experience what college has to offer.

The culminating performance, mounted at the high school with both Libbey and BGSU students performing together along with course professor, Kate Collins, and Libbey teacher, Jennifer Robinson, was a great success. The students were thrilled to learn and experience some of the more unique facets of performance such as shadow puppetry, hand puppets, movement theatre, and choral scripts. The powerful student performance breathed life into a challenging public issue and led to an excellent opportunity for the students to have an open and candid post-show discussion about the need for more young people to be engaged in their communities, further validating the importance of the topic.

