



CICS Loomis and CICS Longwood Elementary Community Peace Event Celebrating Art, Identity, and Action

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, June 5, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Chicago International Charter School \(CICS\) Loomis](#) and [Chicago International Charter School \(CICS\) Longwood Elementary](#)—both managed by [Distinctive Schools](#)—opened their doors to the community for a vibrant community event on Wednesday, June 4, "Be the Peace: Art, Identity, and Action for a More Peaceful Community." The celebration invited families, students, and community members to come together for a day dedicated to civic engagement, art, and joy.

In collaboration with the Bill of Writes Storytellers (BOWS) grant through the University of South Florida, the "Be the Peace" event brought the community together to showcase the powerful intersection of student voice, civic engagement, and the arts used to embolden peaceful solutions to violence. The day's highlights included captivating student performances, an interactive mural created in partnership with the Art Center of Englewood, and engaging hands-on craft stations.

"Through our Community Hub model, we aim to uplift students, families, and the neighborhoods we serve by partnering with organizations doing extraordinary work," said Karin Breo, Director of Partnerships and Community Hubs. "The BOWS grant embodies that mission—bringing art, advocacy, and civic action together to show that young people can lead meaningful change and help build a more compassionate, connected future."

The event provided a unique opportunity for students, families, and partners to participate in an interactive showcase of civic-themed arts experiences designed by talented teaching artists and educators. A central feature of the event was the gallery walk showcasing various BOWS unit projects, where students uplifted important messages to them, from what they loved about their community to the importance of taking care of the Earth. These units demonstrated how student-created art and performance can effectively drive dialogue, reflection, and foster deeper community connections.

"This event is a testament to the incredible talent and civic spirit of our students," said JoeAnn Nash, CICS Loomis Principal. "Through the 'Be the Peace' initiative and our partnership with the BOWS grant, we are not only celebrating students' artistic achievements but also inspiring them to be active participants in building a more peaceful and connected community from a young age."

"Seeing our students, families, and partners come together to celebrate civic engagement through art and performance truly embodied the spirit of our community," said Melinda Jean-Baptiste, CICS Longwood Elementary Principal. "The energy, creativity, and commitment to peace displayed by our scholars reinforced our belief in the power of student voice and strong home-school-community partnerships. We are so proud of what we accomplished together."

"Be the Peace" showcased civic engagement through student-created art and performance, strengthened collaboration within the school communities, engaged families in social-emotional learning (SEL) and arts-based learning, and elevated student work. Outside of the gallery walk, the day included peace-themed student performances encompassing spoken word, dance, drama, and music; an interactive mural creation and various craft stations; a dedicated Civic Action Corner and a "My Voice for Peace" wall for community expression; a "Family Positive Painting" SEL Workshop designed for collaborative learning; fun-filled attractions like a bounce house, yard games, and delicious popcorn and pizza stations; and music provided by a live DJ and booths from various community partners.

For the past two years, Distinctive Schools campuses have integrated civics education with artistic expression in partnership with the BOWS grant. Students have explored civic themes through diverse art forms, collaborating with artists on impactful projects, and developing into confident creators, critical thinkers, and community changemakers.

For media inquiries, please contact: media@distinctiveschools.org.

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About Distinctive Schools: Distinctive Schools is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to supporting and accelerating the work of charter schools serving kids from traditionally underserved backgrounds. The team includes passionate educators and determined leaders who innovate, trailblaze and collaboratively lead a public education transformation, as well as ensure that each and every one of Distinctive Schools students thrives in college, career and life. To learn more, please visit www.distinctiveschools.org.

About the Bill of Writes Storytellers (BOWS) Grant: The Bill of Writes Storytellers (BOWS) grant, a program of the University of South Florida, celebrates student voice, civic engagement, and the intersection of arts and community, empowering young people to express themselves and drive positive change.

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