



Newsletter | July 2026

We bring learning to life every month!



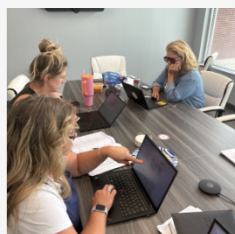
Ready for the Year Ahead

A new school year is on the horizon, and the ArtsNOW team is ready to bring learning to life.

From July 13–17, our team gathered for a week of collaboration and planning focused on the year ahead. Together, we reflected on what educators and school leaders need most, strengthened our strategies, and explored new ways to provide meaningful, customized support throughout the 2026–2027 school year.

We were also pleased to welcome ArtsNOW's new Board Chair, Jill Robinson, CFO of the Atlanta Braves, who joined the team to share her encouragement and help set the tone for a strong year ahead.

As classrooms prepare to welcome students, ArtsNOW is entering the year with renewed energy, clear priorities, and a shared commitment to equipping educators with creative, practical tools that help every student thrive in the classroom.



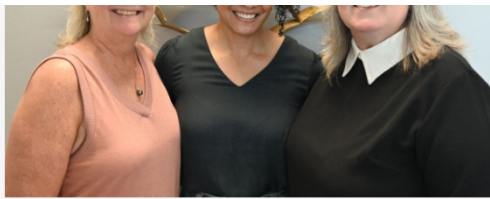
ArtsNOW Welcomes Shakura Conoly as New Director of Marketing & Development

ArtsNOW is thrilled to welcome **Shakura Conoly** as our new **Director of Marketing & Development**. Shakura brings extensive nonprofit experience spanning strategic communications, fundraising, corporate engagement, digital strategy and impact storytelling.

Throughout her career, she has helped mission-driven organizations strengthen relationships, communicate their work more effectively and create meaningful opportunities for supporters to engage. Her thoughtful approach to connecting strategy, storytelling and measurable impact will help ArtsNOW expand awareness, deepen partnerships and build the resources needed to bring learning to life for more educators and students.

We are excited to welcome Shakura to the ArtsNOW team and look forward to the leadership, creativity and perspective she will bring to this work.



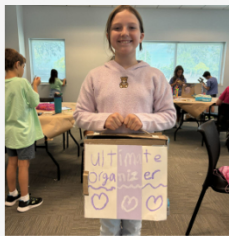


STEAM in Action: Creativity, Engineering, and Problem-Solving

This summer, ArtsNOW partnered with Georgia Tech's Center for Education Integrating Science, Mathematics, and Computing (CEISMC) to bring hands-on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics—or STEAM—learning to students in Savannah and Atlanta.

Across both experiences, students explored the Engineering Design Process through creative challenges that combined engineering with theatre, visual arts, literacy, and technology. By imagining solutions, constructing original designs, testing their ideas, and making improvements, students strengthened the communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills that support meaningful learning across subjects.

Engineering with Theatre in Savannah



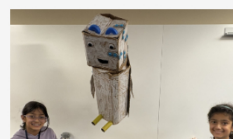
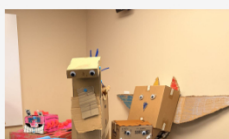
ArtsNOW Project Manager, Kim Mercer, and Teacher Leader, Sariah Spagnuolo, guided students through a collaborative engineering challenge centered on cardboard construction.

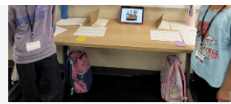
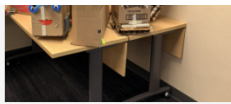
Using Makedo tools, a ChompSaw, recycled cardboard, and a variety of building materials, students imagined, designed, tested, and refined original structures. Students worked through each step of the Engineering Design Process, learning to evaluate their ideas, respond to challenges, and make thoughtful adjustments along the way.

Theatre strategies were intentionally integrated throughout the experience to help students communicate their ideas, consider different perspectives, and work effectively as a team. Students practiced sharing their thinking, listening to their peers, and building on one another's ideas as they developed and improved their structures.

These strategies also created space for students to confidently explain their design choices and reflect on how collaboration shaped the final result. The experience demonstrated how theatre can strengthen engineering instruction by making communication, creativity, and teamwork essential parts of the design process.

From Cardboard Creations to Climate Solutions in Atlanta





At Georgia Tech in Atlanta, ArtsNOW Curriculum & Instruction Specialist Katy Betts facilitated a week-long STEAM camp that challenged students to explore the intersection of engineering, visual arts, literacy, and technology.

Students began by identifying climate-related challenges and imagining original creatures with features designed to help address those problems. Using the Engineering Design Process, they planned and constructed their creatures with Makedo cardboard construction tools, recycled cardboard, and other creative materials. Throughout the week, students tested their ideas, solved construction challenges, and revised their designs. They considered how each creature's physical features could serve a purpose, connecting imaginative thinking with real-world environmental concerns.

Students then extended their learning through digital storytelling. Using the Brush Ninja animation platform, they created narratives showing their creatures responding to environmental challenges. This additional layer allowed students to combine their engineering designs with literacy, visual storytelling, and technology as they developed characters, settings, and solutions. By moving from concept to construction and then from construction to animation, students experienced how ideas can evolve across multiple art forms and academic disciplines.

Canada: Sharing ArtsNOW Research on an International Stage

ArtsNOW recently joined educators, researchers, and education leaders from around the world at the 2026 Canada International Conference on Education.

President and CEO, Pamela Walker, and Executive Vice President and COO, Crystal Collins, presented findings from ArtsNOW's federally funded SAIL initiative to a full audience, highlighting how authentic arts integration in STEM can strengthen instructional practice, increase student engagement, and support academic learning. The presentation was part of ArtsNOW's continued work to share lessons and research from the initiative with the broader education community.

The conference also created opportunities to build new relationships and explore future collaboration. The experience reinforced the value of bringing research, classroom practice, and diverse perspectives together to advance education and expand the reach of arts-integrated learning.



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