

Introduction

For most children, first exposure to the arts occurs in the home, prior to the start of formal education. On the Eastern Shore of Maryland, students are growing up in a rich and unique cultural landscape, with art, history, and tradition embedded in their daily lives. This culture is reflected in local arts institutions like the Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art, an outreach of Salisbury University. The Ward Museum, with its roots in the region's decoy carving tradition, is dedicated to exhibiting, collecting, and promoting traditional arts and interpreting their significance through educational programs and publications.

Serving a broad cross-section of the community and its visitors, the museum is committed to the scholarly study of folklore and folklife. The museum's Lower Shore Traditions (LST) program, founded in partnership with Maryland Traditions and the National Endowment for the Arts, has built an archive of documents, recordings, and photographs to be used by interested community members and scholars. The Ward Museum works continually to identify and interview local tradition bearers and collect ethnographic materials that enhance existing programs and generate ideas for new initiatives. The program has broadened the reach of the museum into the rich cultural landscape of the maritime, agricultural, and marsh communities of the Delmarva Peninsula. Fieldwork conducted in these communities fuels exhibits, lectures, workshops, events, and publications and has formed the basis for partnerships with the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, and many local and regional cultural institutions. The variety of programming from LST engages audiences of all ages from the surrounding communities, with programs on crabbing and oystering, foodways, hunting and trapping, domestic arts, and, of course, regional art forms such as decoy carving.

Through interaction with teachers, school administrators, and other cultural organizations, it became apparent that there was a need for more tools and resources to allow teachers to incorporate local arts and traditions into their classrooms. The Ward Museum hosts many field trips and other school outreach programs, and teachers and homeschool parents were requesting materials for teaching local history and culture. In an effort to

meet this need, the Ward Museum, with the support of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, Maryland Traditions, the Maryland State Arts Council, and the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Council, has developed *Pass It On: Cultural Traditions of the Lower Eastern Shore: A K-12 Curriculum and Activity Guide*. The oral histories, documentary photography, and audiovisual materials developed through LST programming have been used as a basis for the curriculum in both print and online form. This heritage-centered curriculum will prepare students for life as citizens who understand the importance of this place and its people as part of the larger world.

The content for the curriculum is based on research conducted by the Ward Museum with the support of the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Council, the Nabb Research Center for Delmarva History and Culture, the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, public and private schools, and many other educational institutions. Developed over a period of five years, *Pass It On* allows the museum to offer schools and teachers the tools to initiate quality cultural heritage programming in their classrooms. Each unit of the guide has been tested in classroom and workshop settings. As feedback from educators, administrators, parents, and scholars has been collected, the guide, activities, and lesson plans have been revised to meet the needs of students. The activities and lesson plans have also been aligned with Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) standards for social studies, but it is important to note that the topics addressed are multidisciplinary, and many activities can be adapted for use in science, art, and language arts instruction as well.

The guide is divided into four units: Working the Water, Living Off the Land, Sporting and Playing, and Folklore and Folklife. Each unit begins with a list of student objectives, followed by a textual narrative designed to introduce teachers and students to the history and cultural traditions associated with each aspect of Eastern Shore life. The narrative leads to a series of suggested learning activities, activities designed for work outside the classroom, and three specific lesson plans with options that can be adapted according to class size and time allotment. The suggested learning activities are keyed according to a recommended age group, but most can be adjusted in complexity to accommodate younger or older children. Each

extended lesson plan provides an overview, objectives, subject areas, materials and resources lists, activities, extensions, and vocabulary.

An online resource guide, found at www.wardmuseum.org, features electronic versions of each unit's text as well as supplementary text, maps, images, interview transcripts, activities, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) standards alignment for social studies, and additional audiovisual materials for the classroom. Supplementary materials for the activities are listed for easy access and download. The online resource also includes an educator survey designed to collect feedback as the guide is used. As feedback and comments are processed, the online version can be updated and supplemented with new resources as they are created or discovered. Activity kits with supplies and equipment are available for teachers to borrow, and field trips at the museum using content and activities from *Pass It On* can be scheduled. For more information, contact the Ward Museum's Education Department at 410-742-4988, ext. 110.

