

# Bringing Local Artists to Students

**B**ased in Asheville, NC, LEAF Global Arts' mission is to connect cultures and create community through music and arts education and experiences, to cultivate curiosity, preserve cultures and promote global understanding. With funding from Chorus America, LEAF was able to partner with an elementary school to teach weekly music lessons and bring in local artists to interact with and sing with the students.

Melissa McKinney, a local musician and blues singer has been teaching 40-minute lessons weekly to each grade level at WD Williams Elementary school. She selected local artists that have a positive message and they specifically selected songs to try to inspire the students that they could use music and their voices to make positive change in the community. Some of the invited artists include Virtuous, a hip hop artist dedicated to



*Students collaborate with local artists from The Change.*

making uplifting music, Juan Holladay, a member of the Grammy award-winning hip hop artist, Secret Agent Ski Doo, and The Change, a funk band of young, queer, BIPOC artists. Students had an opportunity to interact with the musicians, ask them questions, sing with them, and each session culminated with filming a music video with the artists.

Through this program, students are exposed to a broad range of musical styles performed by local musicians in an effort to not only hone musical skills and inspire them, but also to build community and help both students and artists feel connected to their community which is a part of their broader mission. The program culminated with a performance where students had the opportunity to perform on-stage with the artists at LEAF festival events and an end-of-year concert.

**Through this program, students are exposed to a broad range of musical styles performed by local musicians in an effort to not only hone musical skills and inspire them, but also to build community and help both students and artists feel connected to their community which is a part of their broader mission.**



*Elementary students visit LEAF's recording studio in Asheville, NC.*