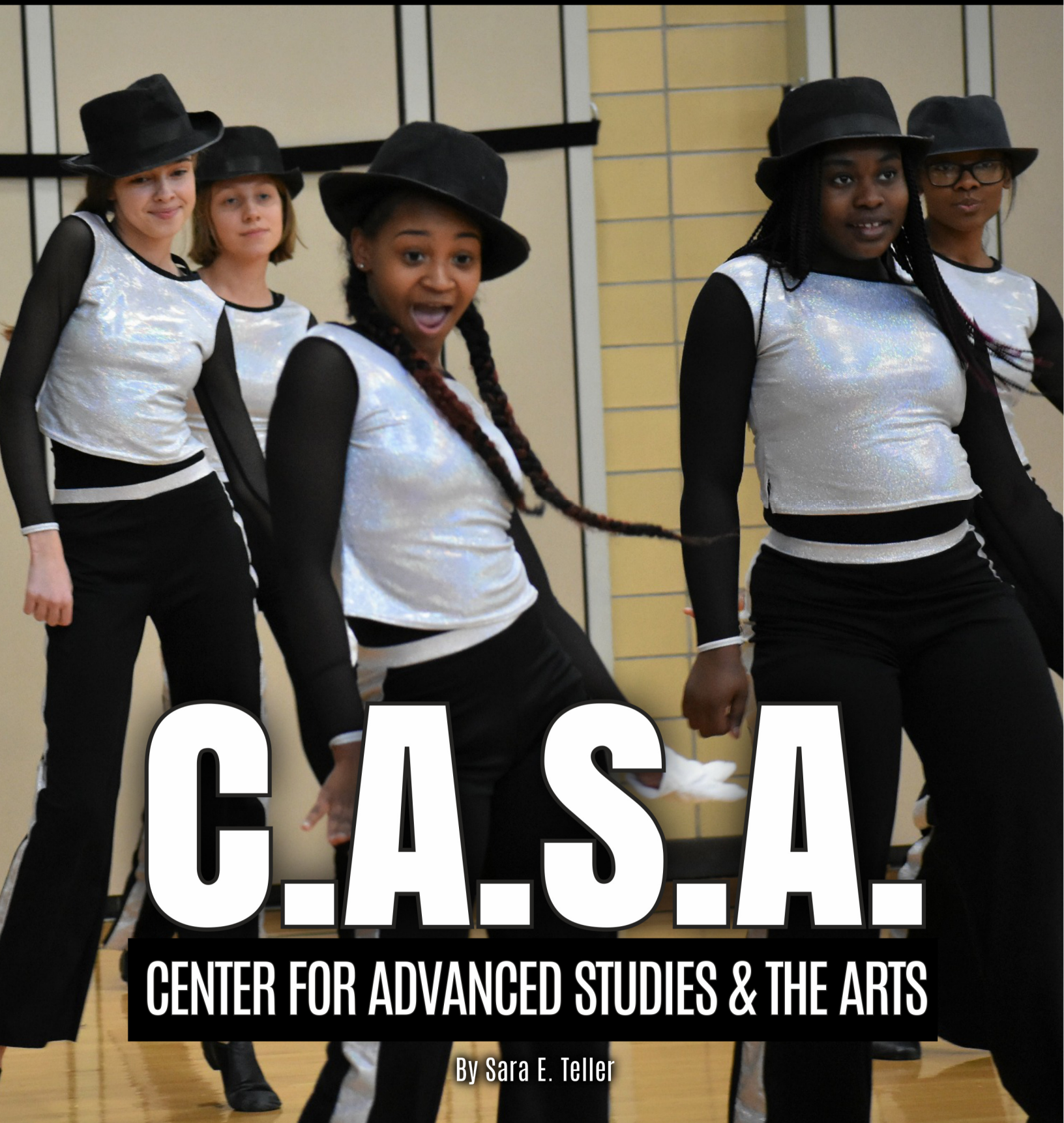


An Advanced Curriculum in a Relaxed, Intimate Atmosphere



C.A.S.A.

CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDIES & THE ARTS

By Sara E. Teller

THE CONCEPT FOR THE **CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDIES AND THE ARTS (CASA)** was born in the 1980s as a way to offer advanced-placement electives for high schools with limited funding. It originally began in Berkley, Ferndale and Oak Park, and has expanded to surrounding communities since that time.

In 2002, CASA moved into the former **Jackson Elementary School** in Oak Park, so it could better accommodate science, computer and art rooms, as well as an expansive dance studio.

Director Jennifer Gebbie explained, "CASA has a relaxed, intimate atmosphere while holding students to high standards and giving them the needed support to meet and exceed those expectations. Coming to CASA gives students a taste of college life; being independent and responsible for attending classes at a different campus and learning in a rigorous environment."

Of the application process, Gebbie said, "CASA accepts students from our seven sending districts: **Berkley, Clawson, Ferndale, Lamphere, Madison, Oak Park and Pontiac**. Students should work with the

counselor at their home high school to apply. There are no strict GPA requirements. CASA students need to be up-to-date on their graduation requirements, be independent and motivated learners, and have the approval from their home high school to enroll."



The center currently offers 16 Advanced Placement classes, including options in dance, visual arts, Japanese language and many more. Its course catalogue is available online. Transportation is also offered to-and-from the center or students may opt to drive.

"CASA OFFERS COURSES THAT MAY NOT BE OFFERED at our sending districts' high schools," Gebbie said. "We also provide an opportunity for students to meet and work with other students from different districts and to gain valuable new perspectives. Our traditionally small class size affords a great deal of one-on-one attention for our students."

As it expands, **TAG MultiMedia**, led by **President and Owner Michelle Armstrong**, has been tasked with developing an innovative approach for the center's digital marketing platform for several months. The company works alongside local businesses looking for ways to leverage the Internet for their businesses, stay competitive, and cut costs around advertising and social media marketing.

"We want this area to be the epicenter of innovation and digital adoption while still keeping a community/main street feel," Armstrong said.

That being said, there are some cutting-edge course offerings in

the works. Gebbie explained, "New courses that we are offering for next year include **Metaverse Studies & Applications** (with the support of TAG Multimedia), **Advanced Multidisciplinary Design I & II, AP Computer Science Principles** and **Genius Hour**."

"The metaverse, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) are here to stay," Armstrong added. "With all that is going on, how can a business owner keep up, let alone learn something this new? These classes are meant to give students entering the workforce a set of coveted skills to help offset the learning curve and early adoption."

CASA'S INSTRUCTORS MOSTLY COME FROM the high schools involved with the program.

"We also have teachers who are instructors at local colleges," Gebbie said. "All our teachers are highly-qualified, have earned master's degrees, and are passionate about teaching and learning."

The Berkley area is a great location for the facility's home base because of its well-known school system, according to Armstrong, who said, "Berkley has one of the strongest educational indexes in the state which has a direct impact on real estate values. Investing in and offering classes that are cutting edge continues the tradition of properly supporting our school districts and maintaining a community-wide standard of excellence. People who live in Berkley stay in Berkley. People moving into Berkley value its identity of warm neighborhoods, charming shops and local pride all while maintaining innovation, commerce and civic growth."

For more information and a list of all of CASA's course offerings, visit casa-online.org.

