

SPECIAL PUBLICATION

Understanding the Market for Arts Education in Afterschool Settings

By Terry Peterson, Scott Shanklin-Peterson, and Jennifer May

Afterschool programs and community learning centers are one of the fastest growing providers of education across America. This study indicates that arts education providers now have a unique and exciting opportunity to expand arts participation, inspire, innovate, and cultivate the creative talents of a new generation of young people by developing afterschool partnerships.

- Since 1998, afterschool programs funded from the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers program grew from 10 to 7,000 schools. (US Department of Education, 2007)
- California is adding 2,000 afterschool programs with new funding in 2007, adding to an existing 2,000 state funded programs, bringing the total to 4,000 (Rosenhall, 2007) and federal funding will cover even more.
- 32 state-level networks have formed to advocate for more afterschool opportunities. (C.S. Mott Foundation, 2007)
- Many mayors have made this a priority, too. (Ouellette, Hutchinson and Frant, 2005)

While observers of afterschool programs and arts advocates have frequently stated how important the arts are to successful afterschool programming and community learning centers (Afterschool Alliance, 2005; Peterson, 2005; National Endowment for the Arts, 2002), it is essential to know how leaders of these local programs evaluate the significance of the arts. This paper presents the interest in arts education identified in a survey of a small, stratified sample of staff at 21st Century Community Learning Centers across the United States. In addition, sample programs are profiled at the close of this article, offering concrete delivery and partnership strategies with proven success.

KEY FINDINGS

In polling, afterschool programs state a desire for inclusion of arts programming.

The survey finds that afterschool leaders rate the arts in afterschool programs as “very important” and “significant.” (See Table 1.) Other studies have found that the arts in afterschool programs are an important ingredient in helping children and youth succeed. (Miller, 2003; Deasy, 2002; Stigelbauer, In Process)

Afterschool arts education prepares young people for the creative economy.

Quality arts programming provides a critical building block for stretching students’ skills and abilities that our creative economy needs. The extra time, flexibility, and partnership possibilities in many afterschool programs are very conducive to including the arts and local arts partners. (Peterson, 2006; National Endowment for the Arts, 2002)

Local and state arts organizations are needed to initiate partnerships between afterschool programs and arts education providers.

The new study indicates that local afterschool program providers do not have the information, time, resources, or contacts to make the arts an integral part of their programs—despite their desire to do so. (See Table 3.) Leadership by local and state arts agencies and cultural organizations is critical to meet this afterschool interest and demand; otherwise, the cultural community risks missing a generation of artists and audience members as afterschool programs continue to provide educational and recreational activities devoid of artistic content.

Concrete strategies for including the arts in afterschool programs ensure program longevity and are easier to implement.

There exist a variety of arts education programs that represent a first-step into the afterschool and 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) environment. These strategies represent

proactive outreach and require modest investment. In so investing, local and state organizations gain access to millions of youth across the country, including clusters of at-risk youth and those in the juvenile justice system.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY THE ARTS IN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

“When well done, the integration of the arts into the school day and into afterschool programs helps build and reinforce important student learning. In this increasing information age and creative economy, knowledge and skills in the arts and music and other art forms are important in their own right, but also help strengthen teamwork, responsibility, persistence, self-discipline, and presenting abilities.” (*Arts and Afterschool: A Powerful Combination*, Afterschool Alliance)

The Afterschool Alliance research brief also states, “The arts also are a vital way to promote learning in the core subjects like reading, writing and arithmetic.” It goes on to say, “Well-designed afterschool and arts programs typically have strong partnerships. These partnerships bring students important, often missing connections to more caring adults and community groups and institutions that can build the students’ repertoire of skills and linkages to people for a better future.”

Many afterschool educators who incorporate the arts into their programs say they promote interdisciplinary learning, engage students who would not otherwise excel, and help reveal students’ hidden talents. (Peterson and Fox, 2004; Stigelbauer, In Process)

The recent survey findings described below include simple strategies that will introduce the arts into afterschool settings. These opportunities can provide a different type of arts instruction and experience than K-12 settings allow. Afterschool arts instruction provides an opportunity for a different flexibility in instructor-type, curriculum content and delivery, and learning goals. “Out-of-school –time” arts instruction affords an easier opportunity to bring a dimension of experience and knowledge that is project-based, exploratory, and experiential. Such instruction doesn’t diminish the importance of standards-based, school day instruction. Well-designed afterschool arts instruction broadens and deepens school-based arts education in new and exciting ways.

METHOD

Local 21st CCLC grant recipients responded from a sample of 12 (not 10 states) (See Appendix A). Most respondents’ host between 2 and 8 afterschool sites or 21st Century Community Learning Centers. The state average was 3-4 grantee survey responses. An analysis of variance was used to test for statistical significance. We present key findings followed by results and discussion.

RESULTS

Rating the Importance of the Arts to Afterschool and Community Learning Centers

The grantees and local leaders of 21st Century Community Learning Centers rated “exposing students in afterschool programs to the arts” as “very important and significant.” They rated highly the statement that “the students in my program would enjoy and be motivated by the arts in their afterschool activities.” There is no significant difference between these two ratings.

While grantees rated as important that students in afterschool programs have arts opportunities and experiences, program administrators rated parental support of this idea as weaker than their own.

Table 1: Importance and Significance of the Arts in Afterschool Programs

<p>Importance and Significance of the arts as rated by 21st Century Grantees</p>	<p>Rating (10 highest; 1 Lowest)</p>
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Exposing students in afterschool programs to the arts is important	9.1**
The students in my program would enjoy and be motivated by arts in their afterschool activities	8.8
The parents of my students would support the inclusion of arts in the afterschool program	7.9**

****These ratings are statistically different from each other****

Usefulness of Approaches to Include the Arts in Afterschool

Given the high interest of community learning center leaders to include the arts in their programs, the research pursued information about what approaches or strategies they would find most suitable to their program structures. (See Table 2).

The two most useful program partnership methods are providing workshops, field trips, story telling experiences, and development of plays; and providing musical instruments and individual or group lessons as an introduction to skills and genres of music.

Other listed strategies were rated highly by afterschool program providers, but were not statistically significant choices. Exploring a different arts area each month, working with local folk and traditional artists, and creating a mentoring program in the arts area of the students' interest were rated highly.

Afterschool program providers rated the following strategies as very useful: working with visual artists to create a mural, showcasing student work publicly outside of school, and creating a summer institute with emphasis on one area of the arts. While many agreed the following strategies are useful, a fewer concurred: working with photographers, video artists and writers to create an oral/visual documentary, introducing students to symphony and band instruments using demonstrations and visits from local performers, and working with professional theater artists to create an original play or film based on student experiences.

An entrepreneurial art business training program working with client project teams to apply these skills was rated as somewhat useful; this strategy had the lowest rating and was significantly lower than the top two rated strategies.

Table 2: Approaches that may be most useful for including the arts in community learning services and afterschool programs

Strategies rated by 21st Century grantees	Ratings (10 highest; 1 lowest)
Strategies rated most useful:	
Provide skills workshops, field trips, story telling circles, play development sessions rehearsals and performances	8.4
Provide musical instruments and individual or group lessons as introduction to various aspects and styles of music (instrument, vocal, hip hop, jazz)	8.4

Strategies rated very useful:	
Explore a different arts area each month	8.1
Work with local folk and traditional artists (quilt makers, fiddlers, etc) from your community/region	7.9
Create a mentoring program for children and local artists/performers or college students in the area of the student's interest	7.8
Work with visual artists to help students create a mural for the school	7.6
Present/showcase work publicly (outside of school facility) in a university museum or local gallery with an opening night reception	7.6
Create a "summer institute" with intense instruction and concentration in one area of the arts	7.6
Work with photographers, video artists and writers to create an oral/visual documentary of family or community history	7.3
Introduce students to symphony and band instruments using demonstrations, videos, discussions, and visits from local performers	7.2
Work with professional theater artists to write, produce, and perform an original play or film based on student experiences	6.9
Strategy rated somewhat useful:	
Include an entrepreneurial art business training program for training in marketing, branding, inventory, and financial management, and then work in client project teams to apply these skills and produce a commissioned work	6.4*

**Statistically different from the top two strategies.*

Resource and Support Availability

Besides providing important information about approaches that would be useful to the inclusion of the arts in afterschool and community learning centers, the grantees also provided information about the degree of accessibility they have to art resources and support (Table 3).

No resource listed or rated was deemed to be easily accessible by the 21st Century Community Learning Center leaders. The highest rating any item received was a "7" on a 10 point scale. Most resources and support rated around "5" on a 10 point scale, indicating low access.

Among those resources that were considered moderately accessible were supplies such as paint and costumes as well as information guides on how to include the arts in afterschool in a meaningful way.

Several items, while not widely accessible, were accessible in some programs, including artists in residence; access to museums, theaters, libraries and concert halls; symphony or university music programs or high school band partnerships; and parental volunteers.

Table 3: Degree of Accessibility to Art Resources and Support

Resource availability rated by 21 st Century grantees	Ratings (10 highest; 1 Lowest)
Rated moderately accessible	
Supplies (examples include: paint, costumes)	7.1
Information/guides on how to include arts in afterschool	6.4
Rated somewhat or sometimes accessible	
Community support (local performers/artists in residence)	5.4
Access to museums, theaters, libraries, concert halls, and galleries	5.1
A Community symphony or university music program or high school band for the possibility of creating partnerships	5.1
Parental support (volunteers)	4.9

Words of Wisdom from the Local Afterschool Leaders

When asked for advice regarding how to increase arts opportunities in afterschool programs, the 21st Century grantees provided sound advice that fell into three main categories: partnerships, relating the arts to academic standards, and connecting to families.

Building Partnerships with Local Arts Agencies and Cultural Organizations

The 21st Century grantees overwhelmingly recommended partnerships and collaboration to make afterschool programs more conducive to the incorporation of the arts. Grantees suggest including community artists and educators, family members, elderly individuals, and college students interested in teaching as a future career as partners. They also recommended utilizing local arts councils to provide information and resources needed to include the arts in a more meaningful way. They also felt that the local arts agencies could provide information regarding how to contact local artists and obtain grants or funding for programs and demonstrations.

Art, music, dance, and drama teachers from both the school and the community can provide support to afterschool program providers if partnerships were forged. Afterschool program providers also indicated that they would like assistance locating experts as well as resources such as galleries and museums. Some programs do not have enough time to take field trips during the afterschool hours, and suggested that demonstrations, shows and activities brought to the afterschool center would enable more robust experiences in the arts.

Arts Integration in Afterschool Settings

Many afterschool providers responded that relating activities in the arts to other academic subjects such as reading, math, science, and social studies would provide for important afterschool experiences for students. Many providers indicated that they would like to have further instruction, and more information, on how to meet this goal. For example, cultural aspects of a region can be more readily understood through incorporation of the arts in social studies activities and tying the arts to cultural experiences of a community.

The Arts as a Vehicle to Connect with and Involve Families

The arts were seen as an important factor in attracting families and students to afterschool programs, and specific projects were suggested to tie the arts to cultural and community experiences related to other subjects. For example, grantees suggested that parents and children learn photography and create a family history/family album together, documenting important experiences or history. Providers suggested administering a "talent and interest survey" in order to increase the involvement of local families in afterschool programs.

The most suggested way to increase family interest and involvement in afterschool arts programs is to provide opportunities for them to share an experience in the arts with their children by completing a project together during a family night. This would allow parents to demonstrate their artistic skills, watch their children in a performance at the afterschool site or work with community members to produce a performance or show for the community at large.

DISCUSSION

It is clear that offering flexible options for arts instruction at existing afterschool programs is a strategy to reach a new generation of youth after school and in the summers. The survey of 21st Community Learning Center program managers reveals high priority families, academic subjects in addition to the arts, and appropriate partnerships and program activities for each site. In short, CCLC managers view the arts as both discretely important and as a means to improve learning and engagement in their afterschool centers.

It is incumbent on the cultural community to expand the arts connections and to program with afterschool and community learning centers. In so doing, the cultural community may cultivate a new generation of otherwise untapped creative talent and untouched arts audiences. It is a win-win opportunity for the afterschool programs and the arts.

SAMPLE PROGRAMS

The descriptions of examples were developed with assistance from Dr. Suzanne Stigelbauer of the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning at SEDL in Austin, Texas. Descriptions were developed from visits to exemplary afterschool sites and SEDL's research on promising practices in afterschool arts programming, as supported by the US Department of Education.

Big Thought

<http://www.bigthought.org>

Big Thought in Dallas, Texas describes itself as "a learning partnership inspiring, empowering, and uniting children and communities through education, arts and culture". Originally started by a local group of theatre people and art educators wanting to help maintain learning through the arts, Big Thought is now a complex organization that provides local and national links to the arts. They partner with more than 70 community agencies to deliver programs that inspire and empower children, helping them become critical thinkers and creative problem solvers. While Big Thought does provide public elementary schools with equal access to arts and cultural resources and help integrate these resources into classrooms, the organization also provides robust experiences in the arts for students in the afterschool hours. Big Thought sponsors Creative Solutions, an afterschool program for students ages 13-17 on probation with the Dallas County Juvenile Department. Creative Solutions strives to provide a safe, supervised, alternative to the streets, where participants can freely

express their opinions and emotions; and give participants a chance to make a positive, successful contribution to their community through a public performance and/or art exhibition. Make a Connection thru Art is also a branch of Big Thought that engages middle school students (11, 12 & 13-year olds), while offering them dynamic opportunities for interpersonal communication, creativity, and teamwork. Participating students come from a variety of backgrounds and neighborhoods, representative of each school involved. Participants from New York, Texas and California have participated in this program.

Chicago Public Schools Afterschool Programs

<http://cpsafterschool.org>

Chicago Public Schools' afterschool programs encompass more than 600 campuses. Each of the sites has an arts partner, and each partner organization is associated with 6 afterschool sites. Partners include Columbia College of Chicago and Urban Gateway, and these organizations provide staff, materials, and training intended to highlight the arts in afterschool. The arts partners provided strong, structured support, with manpower and materials and teachers who understood how to use the arts to excite, encourage, and involve a wide age and skill level of students. Activities are long-term and project based. Performances are included when they benefit the community, such as, Folklorico performances to assist the PTA/PTO. Students are involved and excited about their work. Activities require students to collaborate and cooperate with their peers and the tone of the program is relaxed yet rigorous.

KEWA 21st Century Community Learning Center Afterschool Program, Santa Domingo Pueblo, New Mexico.

This elementary school on the edge of the historic Santa Domingo Pueblo has an afterschool program related to the unique culture of the school and Native American community, as well as the academic and social needs of students. Director JoAnn Melchor explains, "The afterschool program and our school in general need to address the cultural aspects of our pueblo life because our culture is so critical in the lives of our students, parents, and families. Some of our children come from families that have strong traditions, and these students appreciate knowing that the arts of jewelry and pottery making have sustained our people since time immemorial." As a result the program teaches children to work with jewelry, pottery making and design, storytelling and illustrating, as well as homework, leadership, and sports. Throughout the program, community members, artists, and teachers combine their efforts to support students in their artistic development as well as their academic skills. Many of the classes are taught in Keres, the native language spoken at seven pueblos in New Mexico. The connection between the school staff and community creates a learning environment that supports both students and their parents in learning and enhances the cultural continuity of developing traditional artists of the future. One important feature of this program is its use of traditional artists as teachers and its ongoing emphasis on giving students choices of classes but at the same time emphasizing the need for continuity and skill development in art forms (adapted from the SEDL Newsletter, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2006).

Arts Corps

<http://www.artscorps.org/>

The program in Seattle engages middle school students (11, 12 & 13-year olds), while offering them dynamic opportunities for interpersonal communication, creativity, and teamwork. Participating students come from a variety of backgrounds and neighborhoods, representative of each school involved. The Arts Corps Philosophy states "We believe in "emergent curriculum" – a curriculum that grows out of an interaction between students' interests and questions, the expertise of the teaching artist, and the art form being studied. Our teaching artists create comprehensive outlines for their afterschool courses but are not afraid to deviate from them based on the interests of the class."

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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