Best Practices Rubric

Arts Learning Policy and Practice AAD 510

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For the purposes of this rubric, I am choosing to solely focus on arts learning for youth, and most of the recommendations apply to arts partnerships within schools.

I. Types of Organizations:

Three main types of institutions offer arts learning opportunities for youth: K-12 public schools; arts organizations such as nonprofit organizations; and community organizations such as youth-based organizations (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008; Brice-Heath & Roach, n.d.; and McLaughlin, n.d.). Arts learning opportunities can occur after school, during weekends, or during the summer, and in-school arts learning may take the form of short- or long-term artist residencies taught by teaching artists (Wester, 2007, p. 169).

II. Types of Education Program:

School-based arts education programs are designed and implemented by arts specialists, classroom teachers, and teaching artists (Burton, Horowitz, and Abeles, 1999, p. 37). Teaching artists placed in schools are typically from nonprofit arts organizations (Rich, Polin, and Marcus, 2003; Remer, 1996). Arts education should ideally “provide sequential, curriculum-based arts instruction” (NEA, 2002, p. 3) and quality arts education might be linked with non-art related, positive academic outcomes. The best in-school arts learning utilizes an integrated curriculum, which can provide a “transfer of learning” (Remer, 1996, p. 341). In community-based organizations, learning goals can successfully result in life, intellectual, and professional skill building (NEA, 2002).

III. Related to Mission/Education/Audience Development

Cultivating public demand for arts experiences may best be achieved through offering comprehensive arts education to young people. Zakaras & Lowell (2008) state, “education level in general and arts learning in particular are in fact strongly correlated with arts involvement as adults” (p.18). However, care should be taken when arts organizations use this information to justify arts education as simply a tool for audience development, as this may be selling the arts short (Remer, 1996). Arts organizations should, first and foremost, educate youth because it serves their mission (Wester, 2007, p. 161) and secondarily, to supplement the loss of arts education in schools. Schools and community organizations should work together to “improve the educational experience for children” (Remer, 1996, p. 140).

IV. Sustainability

In arts organization partnerships in schools, an important factor of sustainability is that the school administration fully support the program (Burton, Horowitz, and Abeles, 1999, p. 40). These partnerships can be a driving force behind school reform, and can “help build better schools, give students authentic experiences and build bridges between the schools and the larger environment” (Remer, 1996, p. 63). Policymakers and private funders can focus their support on capacity building for community-based organizations (McLaughlin, n.d., p. 25). Evaluation and assessment will also help educators identify areas for improvement to ensure longevity of arts programs.

V. Resources

Facilities, scheduled time, and dedicated personnel are all key to running an arts education program (Remer, 1996). In school programs, if a school “does have facilities but does not adequately account for scheduling and usage—the impact of the experience will be diminished” (Wester, 2007, p. 172). Again, having school administrative staff that can help the arts organization or teaching artist “navigate through the culture and bureaucracy” (Wester, 2007, p. 172) is essential. Financially speaking, art organizations would do well to provide their portion of the funding for school-based arts partnerships from a variety of sources (Remer, 1996, p. 191).

VI. Partners

In planning a comprehensive arts curriculum, art specialists, teaching artists, and teachers from other disciplines ideally will collaborate on curriculum design, becoming allies by sharing expertise with one another (Burton, Horowitz, and Abeles, 1999; and Remer, 1996). When all parties have a shared sense of ownership in the project, it is more likely to succeed (Wester, 2007, p. 180). Effective and frequent communication will result both in better coordination of activities (Rich, Polin, and Marcus, 2003, p. 14), and “a shared understanding of the enterprise’s purpose and of who is responsible for doing what” (Remer, 1996, p. 206).

VII. Planning and Implementation Process

With regards to a community-based organization, it is better if the arts program plans “come from and with young people rather than for them” (Brice-Heath & Roach, n.d., p. 25). The best plans, in addition to being youth-centered, are knowledge- and assessment-centered (McLaughlin, n.d.). One tool for planning a good school-based arts program is by utilizing a “backwards design” (Wester, 2007, p. 173), wherein student outcome goals are identified, and these guide the development of the curriculum. In addition, a program that includes elements of arts exposure, participation, reflection, and internalization is likely to have the highest level of impact on the student (Remer, 1996, pp. 120-121).

VIII. Teacher Supports/Professional Development

With regards to school/arts organization partnerships, it is ideal that the teaching artist have some training in the basics of classroom teaching. Agencies and foundations should take leadership in designing this pre-service training, which should include: “philosophy of arts education, theories and models of arts education, teaching methods and the content of instruction, collaboration with educators, effective assessment, and knowledge of school culture” (Rich, Polin, and Marcus, 2003, pp. 6-7), as well as “the art of pedagogy” (Remer, 1996, p. 322). In-service training for both teachers and teaching artists is also necessary, and can be a collaboration, wherein the two parties teach one another (Remer, 1996, p. 325).

IX. Theories of Learning

Schools and arts organizations approach teaching curriculum in varying ways, using a transmission, transaction, or transformation approach (Remer, 1996, pp. 347-348). While art may be a natural fit for the transformational perspective, this may not be the overall perspective of the school, and this must be taken into consideration when arts partnerships are formed. Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences (Remer, 1996) provides a useful framework for understanding how different youth learn and creating curriculum to engage a variety of learners. Winner and Hetland (2008) describe eight “studio habits of mind” (p.30) that arts instruction can instill in students, and these serve as a powerful justification for arts learning to policymakers and funders. Finally, the best arts curriculum includes: aesthetic perception, artistic creation, historical and cultural context, and interpretation and evaluation of works of art (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008).

X. Assessment and Outcomes

An important aspect of assessment of learning in community-based organizations is youth self- and peer-critique (Brice-Heath & Roach, n.d.). These organizations should document how their programs increase students’ academic and social success and decrease dropout rates (McLaughlin, n.d.; Calderaarts.org). Arts organizations partnering with schools should evaluate arts learning programs for the sake of improving their own performance (Wester, 2007), as well as to justify their existence to private funders. Data collected should be both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Many tools can be used to conduct program evaluation and student assessment. Information can be gathered from students, teachers, and staff in different ways: portfolios, narrative accounts, surveys, tests, and interviews (Remer, 1996, p. 123).

XI. Populations Served

In arts organization/school partnerships, an effort should be made to reach every student (Remer, 1996, p. 149). Community-based organizations, especially, can fill the “institutional gaps” that even suburban and rural youth are subject to fall through (McLaughlin, n.d., p. 2). Creating arts learning opportunities that address racial and ethnic diversity should always factor into program design. Different kinds of arts learning programs are better suited for larger or smaller numbers of participants. Wester (2007) says, “In general, exposure oriented programs tend to be more successful in reaching greater numbers of students-if that is part of the decided goal. Programs designed for a more in-depth investigation into the art form are more successful for smaller numbers of students” (p. 173).

XII. Models

The program Wolf Trap Institute For Early Learning Through the Arts provides quality performing arts instruction to students by placing performing artists in classroom residencies. Head Start teachers are provided with training by teaching artists, the two parties partner to teach lessons, and student learning is evaluated according to predetermined dance standards (NEA, 2002, pp. 26-27)

Portland Taiko is a Japanese drumming performance group. The organization conducts around five residencies per year to schoolchildren in kindergarten through sixth grade. Most residencies reach an entire school at a time, and weave history and ethics into musical training. Self-reflection is also an important component to the lessons. The group works with teachers to encourage the curriculum to be integrated into the students’ other courses (Oregon Arts Commission, 2012).

XIII. Research That Supports

In addition to those listed in the References, these publications are useful when examining best practices in arts learning:

Toward Civilization: A Report on Arts Education by National Endowment For the Arts, 1988

Intersections: Community Arts and Education Collaborations by Craig Dreeszen, 1992

Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development by Richard Deasy, 2002

Doing Well and Doing Good By Doing Art: The Effect of Education in the Visual and Performing Arts on the Achievements and Values of Young Adults by James Catterrall, 2009

References

Brice-Heath S. and A. Roach.  (n.d.) Imaginative actuality: Learning in the arts during the

non-school hours.  In E. Fiske, Ed. *Champions of change: The impact of the arts on learning*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership, 19-34.

Burton, J.R. Horowitz, and H, Abeles (1999). Learning in and through the arts: Curriculum

implications. *Champions of change*: *The impact of the arts on learning*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership, 35-46.

Dana Foundation. (2003). *Acts of achievement: The role of performing arts centers in education*. Dana Press: NY.

McLaughlin, M. W. (nd). *Community counts: How youth organizations matter for youth development*. Washington, DC: Public Education Network.

National Endowment for the Arts. (2002). *Learning through the arts*: *A guide to the National Endowment for the arts and arts education*. Washington, DC: National Endowment For the Arts.

Remer, J. (1996). *Beyond enrichment: Building effective arts partnerships with schools and their community*. New York, NY: American Council For the Arts.

Wester, M. Arts education: Developing a successful program. In Korza, P. & M. Brown, Eds. *Fundamentals of arts management,* 5th ed*.*. 3. Amherst, Mass: Arts Extension Service, University of Massachusetts, 258-391.

Winner E. &  Hetland, L. Art for our sake: School arts classes matter more than ever–but not for the reasons you think. *Arts Education Policy Review*, Vol. 109, No. 5, May/June 2008: 29-31.

 Zakaras, L. & J. Lowell. (2008). *Cultivating Demand for the Arts: Arts Learning, Arts Engagement, and State Arts.* RAND Corporation.