

community mobilization

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Demonstrating the Value of Arts Education in Schools

Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth

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Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY) created the Picasso Project to financially support art and music instruction in Philadelphia's public schools and generate advocacy for more school funding of the arts. The Picasso Project makes small grants enabling inadequately funded public schools to incorporate an arts education project into the curriculum.

Background:

Art and music programs in Philadelphia have been devalued and sacrificed in favor of basic academic subjects in an attempt to raise standardized test scores. Out of 275 schools, 152 have no art program and 120 have no music. In 2001, PCCY issued a report on the academic value of arts and music education, citing research on how art and music programs actually strengthen critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as benefit overall academic achievement and school success. After reading the report, two school district administrators approached PCCY to discuss possible solutions. In the fall of 2002, through collaboration with a local family foundation, PCCY launched the Picasso Project, providing small grants to schools to provide for art, music, dance and drama projects, and advocating for more public funding for arts education in schools.



Key Elements

- **Funding**
 - The project attracts foundations that ordinarily do not fund advocacy efforts, but that are interested in the arts and drawn in by the knowledge that the money will go directly to the classroom.
 - Outreach efforts attract additional funding from individuals. PCCY plans to hold informational “house parties” in the city and suburbs to attract new constituencies. Guests, including current PCCY donors and potential supporters, will hear about the project directly from teachers and students.

“There are so many rich resources in the city and kids are going through school with no exposure to this.” - Bonnie Raines, Youth & Development Director, Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth

- **Grants**
 - PCCY sends an application packet to all area public schools in November. (In coming years, schools will receive posters for advance publicity.) Teachers receive application guidelines, project evaluation criteria, and possible arts organizations with which to partner.
 - Potential projects must be integrated into core academic subjects and have a duration greater than half the school year. Schools must demonstrate how a proposed project would enrich the curriculum.
 - Grants range from \$500 to \$5000, depending on the projects proposed and current assets.
 - A 15-member Advisory Committee comprised of artists, educators, community leaders, parents, and child advocates supervises the projects. PCCY gathered interested individuals to form the initial Committee, which included PCCY staff and board members. There is no formal rotation of Committee members.
 - The Advisory Committee developed a template for an evaluation outcome report, encompassing factors such as populations served, problems encountered, and the extent to which goals were met. Each grant recipient submits this report at the conclusion of the grant period.

- **Advocacy**
 - Schools receiving grants must also carry out an advocacy activity and report on it in the evaluation outcome report. The Advisory Committee provides schools with a “menu” of possible activities, such as visiting the city council or writing letters to elected officials.
 - A subcommittee meets with elected officials to encourage them to write articles and op-eds about the Picasso Project.
 - In order to raise public awareness and generate publicity, PCCY plans to contact artists, musicians and dancers who have come through the Philadelphia public school system and encourage them to become ambassadors and spokespersons.

Staff Time

- PCCY developed the project over a 6-month period between the beginning of the year and the fall.
- The busiest time each year is from mid-December, when applications are due, through mid-January, when grant recipients are notified. The Advisory Committee reads over submissions and meets in small groups to score each of the applications.
- The entire Advisory Committee meets four times per year. Three subcommittees—fundraising, publicity/public awareness, and operations—meet as necessary.
- One PCCY staff member spends two days per week on fundraising for the project and administration.
- A member of the Advisory Committee is linked to each school grantee in order to provide support and advice about the project throughout the school year. The member visits the school, oversees the project, and contacts community newspapers and elected officials to generate awareness of the school’s grant.

Outcomes

- The Picasso Project has raised over \$98,000, awarding grants to 30 schools from a total of 70 applicants, and reaching approximately 7,000 children in elementary, middle, and high schools throughout the city.
- PCCY senses an increased awareness among legislators of the inadequacies of public school funding and the importance of arts education.
- One school worked with a city council member who introduced a resolution in council for “Arts Education Day”. After the resolution was adopted, the school brought children to the city council, where they performed a sample from their production of “Annie” and spoke about the value of their experience.