



ENGAGING ADOLESCENTS

BUILDING YOUTH PARTICIPATION
IN THE ARTS





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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

When the National Guild for Community Arts Education surveyed its members recently, we learned that 100 percent of these community arts education providers ranked training and information on effective music and arts programs for adolescents as a high priority.

This interest came as no surprise, considering the potential impact of high-quality arts education for teens. Research shows that arts education improves their artistic and life skills, self-image, and social commitment.

With support from the NAMM Foundation, the National Guild launched the multiyear Engaging Adolescents Initiative in 2010. Our goal is to increase teen participation in arts education by enhancing the effectiveness and scope of existing programs and catalyzing the development of new programs. The initiative sought answers to these questions: What do adolescents want? What do they need? How do we reach them? How do we sustain their involvement so they remain engaged in the arts?

Engaging Adolescents: Building Youth Participation in the Arts, the result of the National Guild's research on effective practices, outlines a holistic approach that integrates arts learning with principles of youth development. It is designed to help staff and faculty develop new programs and services for teens or to rethink and strengthen programs they already offer. Profiles of organizations in varying stages of implementing this approach illustrate the concepts this guide describes.



A distinguished advisory group of youth development and arts education experts guided the initiative. We are grateful to them for sharing their wisdom:

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE



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National Guild Associate Director Ken Cole conceived and directs the Guild's Engaging Adolescents Initiative. Donna Walker-Kuhne, arts administrator, adult educator, and president of Walker Communications Group, was project director for the May 2010 Engaging Adolescents Institute, which catalyzed the development of this guide. She and Heather Ikemire, the Guild's Director of Marketing and Communications, guided the advisory group in developing the content outline from which Ellen Hirzy authored this work. Ken, Heather, Donna, and members of the advisory committee helped refine the manuscript, and Stephanie Golden served as editor. We are grateful to the entire team for a job well done.

As the organizations profiled here have learned, meaningful engagement in arts education can have a life-changing impact on teens. We hope this guide will inspire you to create new programs or move your current work to a deeper level of engagement, extending this same impact to young people in your communities.

— **JONATHAN HERMAN**, Executive Director
National Guild for Community Arts Education

WHY ENGAGE ADOLESCENTS?

Most programs for adolescents are designed by adults based on our ideas about what works best for them. We choose the subject matter, teaching method, schedule, and location, and we design the learning environment. But it is a challenge to reach teens, attract them to an organization, and sustain their interest over time. Arts education providers may therefore be apprehensive about creating meaningful experiences for hard-to-please teens.

On the other hand, effectively embracing the high-spirited, in-your-face energy that adolescents bring to an organization can be intensely rewarding. The holistic approach to engaging youth described here offers a way to recruit and retain teenagers by combining high-quality arts education with support for accomplishing the key tasks of adolescent development. Through arts education, you can involve, motivate, and support teens as they navigate the passage to adulthood while maintaining their interest and involvement in your programs.

Informal, out-of-school community arts education gives teens a chance to stretch their minds, bodies, and imaginations in a setting that is less obviously structured, programmatically more flexible, and conducive to more informal mentoring relationships with adults. Community arts organizations that actively engage this age group can intentionally shape environments and programs that contrast with a formal classroom: a balance

of structured and unstructured time, social interaction built in to the learning experience, and opportunities for developing leadership, teamwork, communication, and other life skills.

This guide is designed for organizations in different stages of developing programs for teens—from those who already have experience working with young people but want to expand and deepen their offerings to those who currently have no such programs and are contemplating creating one.

WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT?

The term *engagement* often refers simply to recruiting people to attend a program. In a broader sense, it includes the concept of power sharing: working *with* them, as opposed to creating programs *for* them, so they become co-creators

“As a society, we offer less than we should to help adolescents negotiate the tumultuous teen years.”

PHILIP YENAWINE, FUEL: GIVING YOUTH THE POWER TO SUCCEED

WHY ENGAGE ADOLESCENTS?

of programs that reflect their needs. The programs described in this guide engage youth in this way. They take a holistic approach to engagement that intentionally links artistic and individual growth. With the help of adult facilitators, youth build artistic skills while participating directly in a process of decision making and meaning making that helps them meet critical developmental needs.

This approach is teen centered. It emphasizes positive experiences that acknowledge young people's assets. Power is shared and organized among adolescents and between adolescents and adults. Young people actively participate as resources, problem solvers, and community builders, rather than simply being recipients of services.

This process of engagement is not linear. Even before getting youth “in the door,” programs invite prospective students to participate in focus groups and individual interviews that inform program design. Current students continue to shape programs by playing an active advisory role, recruiting and mentoring their peers, collaborating on artistic decisions, and evaluating the program. The result: profoundly meaningful

opportunities for youth development that build participation in the arts.

This guide offers a basic framework for considering and planning an integrated arts education–youth development program. If you are looking to deepen and expand a program you already provide, it will help you decide what types of innovations to implement. If you are considering creating such a program, it will guide you in thinking about what the possibilities are for your organization. Chapters 1 and 2 provide background and a framework for an engagement approach: Chapter 1 defines engagement and explains its benefits for both adolescents and arts organizations, while Chapter 2 briefly describes adolescents' key developmental needs and the basic considerations involved in connecting with them. Chapter 3 explores three core components of engaging youth more deeply. Chapter 4 presents nine fundamental strategies for developing successful youth engagement programs. Interspersed throughout are eight profiles of outstanding programs, including practical advice culled from practitioners' experience.

INCORPORATING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INTO ARTS EDUCATION

Art educator Philip Yenawine observes that adults working with youth “infrequently get it right ... Adolescents are therefore too rarely given the guidance they deserve to help them navigate these troubling years with a sense of direction, control, and accomplishment.” Successful programs, he believes, “have inherent value to kids, they have an authentic connection to the world, and they reflect the work of adults.”¹

In the traditional out-of-school arts education model, students progress through a hierarchy of skills. Sometimes the timeframe begins in elementary school or earlier, with the goal of mastering a set of skills, such as learning to dance or to play an instrument. Or learning takes place

“This guide offers a framework for considering and planning an integrated arts education – youth development program.”

WHY ENGAGE ADOLESCENTS?



“While an expert-novice relationship can be found within youth development models, it is not the prime relationship.”

over a shorter period, as in a summer photography course that teaches basic skills and techniques, culminates in an exhibition, and inspires students to continue learning and practicing independently. In this model, students are considered novices and teaching artists experts, the same as in a formal classroom setting. “The adults’ knowledge is complete, finished, and whole,” writes Stephani Etheridge Woodson, an assistant professor in the Theatre for Youth graduate program at Arizona State University. “The youths’ knowledge is incomplete, surface, and in progress.”²

Youth development refers to an intentional process that promotes positive outcomes for youth (for example, knowledge of self, connections, expressive skills, and competence) by giving them the opportunities, relationships, and support they need to participate fully in their own personal, social, and cultural growth.³ A youth development model for arts education combines development of life skills with instruction in the arts. Within this model, students gain skills that transfer to other parts of their lives through arts instruction that sets high expectations, encourages positive risks, and promotes leadership. At the same time, students engage more deeply in

the arts because they are given real responsibilities that build on their inherent strengths. “While an expert-novice relationship can be found within youth development models,” Woodson notes, “it is not the prime relationship.”⁴

Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit exemplifies such programs. Its slogan — “Excellence on Stage and in Life” — speaks volumes about its capacity to teach, motivate, and inspire adolescents. Mosaic is designed to improve artistic, life-building, and critical thinking skills and to promote a sense of cultural belonging and participation. At Marwen, a Chicago arts education and youth development organization, the goals for engagement are “to develop young people’s skills, self-esteem, body of knowledge, capacity for teamwork, and individual voices.” And in Minneapolis, an advisory group of teen students at MacPhail Center for Music collaborates with staff on changing MacPhail’s image to become the “cool place” for music education. They build leadership, communication, and teamwork skills while learning the organization’s inner workings.

➞ CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

PHOTO: CRESCENDO ACADEMY OF MUSIC, KALAMAZOO, MI. PHOTOGRAPHER: KEITH EVERETT JONES.

MOSAIC YOUTH ENSEMBLE

MOSAIC YOUTH THEATRE OF DETROIT

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

Arts education professionals often turn to *Excellence on Stage and in Life: The Mosaic Model for Youth Development through the Arts* as a guide to effective practices in engaging adolescents. This report on a three-year study shows that Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit's award-winning professional performing arts training programs have a measurable impact on artistic ability, academic achievement, and personal and professional development.

Mosaic programs focus on three outcomes:

Skills: Arts discipline and skill, academic achievement, and employability

Self: Positive self-image, high self-expectations, and ambitious goal-setting

Society: Respect for diversity, community involvement, and positive social capital

The core program is the Mosaic Youth Ensemble, made up of more than 100 young people from throughout metropolitan Detroit, ages 12 to 18, selected by audition and interview. Members receive nine months of intensive education and training in acting and vocal music, at no cost. Their rigorous schedule involves at least 10 hours a week of rehearsal time, performances in schools, and public performances. The Ensemble's all-teen theatre and music performances have toured Africa, Asia, Europe, and the United States and



Canada, including the White House and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Even though Detroit has one of the nation's worst dropout rates, 95 percent of Ensemble alumni have graduated from high school and gone on to college.

Advanced Ensemble members have the opportunity to move on to Mosaic Next Stage, receiving a stipend for their performances. Mosaic also offers an intermediate program and beginning classes at satellite locations, together serving more than 1,000 6- to 18-year-olds every year.

MOSAIC YOUTH ENSEMBLE

The study on the Mosaic model shows that its foundational values—insistence on high expectations, active participation, and total acceptance of each individual—stimulate not just artistic accomplishment, but improved grade-point averages, educational aspirations, and confidence about academic goals. The study also found a significant positive impact on life skills: how youth conduct themselves, organize their time, manage stress, lead a group, maintain a positive sense of self, interact with people of different backgrounds, and set ambitious personal goals.

Founder and CEO Rick Sperling says the conscious decision to set high standards led to a turnaround early in Mosaic's history, when interest and attendance began to fade. When adults raised the bar and made teens responsible for their own success, "it became a thing of honor to be in this program." Empowerment led to better art, which in turn strengthened the youth development impact.

ENGAGEMENT ADVICE

- ➔ **YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES APPLY TO EVERY SOCIOECONOMIC LEVEL.** Adolescents from all backgrounds struggle with many of the same issues. "It is shortsighted to think youth development is only effective or needed in urban environments," says Sperling. Mosaic students come from a variety of social, economic, racial, cultural, and religious backgrounds. They represent more than 50 city and suburban schools, and equal proportions of very low-income, low-to-moderate income, and higher-income backgrounds. Socioeconomic level makes no significant difference in the amount of individual support Mosaic young artists need.
- ➔ **TEENS NEED ADULTS WHO TEACH AND SUPPORT.** A teaching artist who connects well with teens around artistic expression may not be the same adult who can provide support and mentoring for individual development and problem solving. Two adults work with every Mosaic program: a teaching artist and a youth support director.
- ➔ **BE REALISTIC ABOUT SCALE, BUT PLAN FOR A LONG-TERM PROGRAM.** Address sustainability issues head-on by being realistic about the scale of program you can reasonably support. Stable,

long-term programs provide more consistent benefits for teens than episodic efforts. Realistic planning helps prevent cutbacks, which will have a negative developmental impact because teens lose not just an activity, but a meaningful experience with personal attachments.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit

www.mosaicdetroit.org

3011 West Grand Blvd.,
Ste. 1510,
Detroit, MI 48202

*Excellence on Stage and
in Life: The Mosaic Model
for Youth Development
through the Arts*

[www.mosaicdetroit.org/
about-model.htm](http://www.mosaicdetroit.org/about-model.htm)

WHY ENGAGE ADOLESCENTS?

The program profiles throughout this guide show how a diverse group of organizations have integrated youth development into their arts education programs. These programs are youth powered, not adult driven. They are founded on a shift to an asset-based approach that, instead of relying on assumptions and stereotypes, is based in real understanding of who teens are, what they are hungry for, and how they can participate.

BENEFITS FOR TEENS

Research and anecdotal evidence suggest that high-quality arts education programs that incorporate youth development practices can develop young people's artistic abilities while improving their life skills, self-image, and social commitment.

- ➔ A decade-long research project by Shirley Brice Heath and Adelma A. Roach found that in a youth development-based model for arts learning out of school, “young people expect to play many different roles, help make rules, and be able to take risks by trying something new, taking inspiration from unexpected sources, and creating new combinations of materials, ideas, and people.”⁵

- ➔ The Surdna Foundation reported three “core impacts” of direct participation in art making: developing individual voice, leveraging of life skills through art making, and creating a sense of belonging and community. “The best work,” Surdna concluded, “takes a holistic approach to the creative development of young people, combining a search for significant artistic advancement with purposeful development of individual life skills.”⁶
- ➔ Similarly, a University of Michigan study found that Mosaic Youth Theatre’s program yielded positive outcomes in skills development, personal development, and a greater understanding of society and the youth’s place in it.⁷

The Boston Youth Arts Evaluation Project (BYAEP), a three-year initiative by five nonprofit youth arts organizations, is developing an evaluation language and methodology appropriate to the “beauty, complexity, and holistic nature” of these organizations’ work with adolescents. BYAEP reviewed existing research literature, evaluation tools, philosophies, and frameworks to create the BYAEP Framework for Outcomes in Youth Arts Programs, which makes sense for most kinds of programs and activities community arts



“These programs are youth powered, not adult driven.”

education providers are likely to offer. The framework outlines short-term outcomes, detailed in the box on page 9, that together lead to the intermediate and long-term outcomes listed in the darker central segments of Figure 1.⁸

PHOTO: VIBE THEATER EXPERIENCE, NEW YORK, NY

WHY ENGAGE ADOLESCENTS?

FIGURE 1.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES FOR PARTICIPANTS IN YOUTH ARTS PROGRAMS

BUILDS ARTISTIC, PROBLEM SOLVING, AND EXPRESSIVE SKILLS ("I CREATE")

- ➔ Increases artistic engagement in focus, skills, and in one's authenticity and passion in the arts.
- ➔ Uses problem solving/critical thinking to be reflective, analytic, and creative in finding solutions to challenges.
- ➔ Develops expressive skills and the ability to convey feelings and thoughts artistically and verbally.

STRENGTHENS IDENTITY ("I AM")

- ➔ Builds confidence with self-assurance arising from one's belief in one's own abilities or qualities.
- ➔ Increases knowledge of self through self-awareness of characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses; honest self-reflection into one's history, cultural influence, and one's current thoughts, feelings, and actions; and self-regulation of behavior to increase the likelihood of a desired end goal.
- ➔ Understands how one's identity is informed by cultural identity (place, gender, race, history, nationality, abilities, language, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, ethnicity, class, and aesthetics).
- ➔ Develops a positive view of the future by internalizing optimism about the outcomes for one's life ("possible selves") and increasing one's ability to set short- and long-range goals (especially in education and/or employment).

DEVELOPS COMMUNITY ("WE CONNECT")

- ➔ Increases support and belonging where one develops positive bonds, empathy, respect for others, and an increased ability to communicate and work with a diverse set of people, including those with cultural identities and experiences different than one's own.
- ➔ Builds contribution by finding opportunities, exchanging ideas, and working together to create something in the community.
- ➔ Gains recognition, appreciation, and/or acknowledgment for an achievement, service, or ability in the eyes of others/community.

FRAMEWORK FOR OUTCOMES IN YOUTH ARTS PROGRAMS

BOSTON YOUTH ARTS EVALUATION PROJECT



SOURCE: BYAEP.COM

WHY ENGAGE ADOLESCENTS?

BENEFITS FOR ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

As an intentional strategy, a holistic approach to engaging adolescents adds value to any organization, whether it is located in the heart of a city, a small town, or a suburban community—and whether it is trying to incorporate youth development and engagement principles into existing programs or starting a new program. Teens struggle with similar issues that cross socioeconomic, cultural, religious, and racial boundaries.

Organizations whose students come from a variety of backgrounds find that teens uniformly need and respond to similar kinds of support. When you involve teens as more than customers who come and go, you touch the lives of an age group that often lacks meaningful opportunities to engage with their peers and adult mentors. Your organization also benefits from their insights, opinions, and energy. If you ask them—whether informally, in a formal needs assessment, or by starting a youth advisory group—you'll learn what program structures work best for them, how to attract more of their peers to your organization, and how they think they've grown as individuals as a result of your programs.

DECIDING TO TAKE A FRESH LOOK AT TEEN PROGRAMS

Mission, not marketing, should drive your decision to catalyze participation and adopt new ways of working with teens. The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis incorporates engagement in a variety of programs for young people, guided by a specific mission of connecting teens to contemporary art and artists. The Walker notes:

There is an immediate connection between artists and teens—both are actively engaged in overturning conventional wisdom and questioning the status quo... The spirit of youth-directedness guides all our work with teenagers. While we want to nurture future audiences for the arts, what we want most is to impact teens' lives right now, and try to create opportunities and ways for them to interact with and shape the life of the institution.⁹

When genuine engagement occurs, your organization will:

- ➔ Create programs that are teen centered, not adult directed
- ➔ Offer empowering arts experiences that meet teens' needs
- ➔ Involve youth voices in the organization as participants, advisers, and advocates
- ➔ Contribute high-quality arts education options to the community's out-of-school-time offerings for teens

Boosting enrollment, promoting retention, and cultivating future adult students and supporters are desirable outcomes of adolescent engagement, but not necessarily the primary goals when starting or expanding a program.

➔ CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

“Your organization... benefits from their insights, opinions, and energy.”



PHOTO: PHOTO: BALLET NOUVEAU COLORADO, BROOMFIELD, CO

NEW YORK YOUTH SYMPHONY

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

The New York Youth Symphony (NYSS) is acclaimed among organizations of its kind, with a tradition of attracting some of the most talented young musicians in the New York City area. Since 1963 the symphony has enjoyed critical praise. A 17-year-old Itzhak Perlman performed in the first concert, and NYYS has been a launching pad for future musicians ever since.

Artistic development through professional ensemble training and performance opportunities has always been at the heart of the NYYS mission. But recently the organization adopted a more explicit focus on the added value of its youth programs: music as the starting point for developing self-discipline, teamwork, and personal skills.

“Students learn as much about themselves as they do about their music,” says Barry Goldberg, executive director and senior vice president. Sometimes just being taken seriously as musicians—something that might not happen in other environments—helps these teens grow as individuals. The NYYS core values, developed in July 2010, reflect this intentional focus. At the top of the list: “We value the excellence of our teaching and mentoring” and “We encourage personal development, creativity, self-discipline, and working well with others.”



The orchestra selects about 110 members through annual auditions and holds four-hour rehearsals every Sunday afternoon. Rigorous performance, artistic, and behavioral standards are integral to the educational process. The season consists of three concerts presented in Carnegie Hall. Other programs that serve 12- to 22-year-olds are the Chamber Music Program, the Jazz Band Classic Program, the Apprentice Conducting Program, and the composition and orchestration workshop series Making Score.

NEW YORK YOUTH SYMPHONY

The annual fall Kickoff Weekend, an NYYS tradition for 25 years, reinforces principles of commitment, teamwork, and self-discipline. At a conference center in the Catskill Mountains, musicians participate in intensive rehearsals, with free time for hiking, sports, movies, practicing, and relaxing. This three-day event builds camaraderie, bridges gaps created by different life experiences or even instrument choices, and helps teens open up to their peers and adults. Orchestra staff continue this proactive approach by holding focus sessions with students during the year and end-of-season evaluations. As with all NYYS programs, the shared passion for music creates an environment for artistic growth, which in turn nurtures teens as individuals.

“Engage board and staff. Bring everyone on board with the idea of youth development.”

ENGAGEMENT ADVICE

- ➔ **BE INTENTIONAL.** Make a conscious decision to promote personal development through artistic training and performance. Choose language that makes your intention specific, and use it in public interactions, on your website, in marketing materials, and in staff and student handbooks.
- ➔ **ENGAGE BOARD AND STAFF.** Bring everyone on board with the idea of youth development. After a strategic planning process, the NYYS developed a new mission statement that makes more of an organizational commitment to individual development.
- ➔ **USE RETREAT SETTINGS.** A daylong or weekend teen gathering is a good way to kick off a new program or a new approach to engaging and involving teens in your organization. Use the time to build interest, commitment, and teamwork.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

New York Youth Symphony

850 Seventh Ave., Suite 505
New York, NY 10019

www.nyys.org

WHY ENGAGE ADOLESCENTS?

GETTING STARTED

As you contemplate developing programs involving greater youth engagement, consider:

- ➔ The developmental characteristics and needs of adolescents
- ➔ The basic principles of an arts education—youth development approach
- ➔ The impact of this approach on teens
- ➔ Core values of successful adolescent engagement
- ➔ Basic practices for engaging adolescents

Authentic youth engagement requires a shift in focus. Besides promoting progressive mastery of musical skills, acting techniques, or photography principles, a holistic approach helps adolescents meet critical developmental needs. When these needs are being met, young people's participation in the arts grows because the programming is meaningful and relevant to them.

LIFE LESSONS FROM YOUNG ARTISTS

"It's not how good you are but how hard you work for what you want to do in life."

YOUNG ARTIST, MOSAIC YOUTH THEATRE OF DETROIT

"You not only get better at your instrument, but it helps your character. You learn to be humble, a better person."

NELSON MALDONADO, BERKLEE CITY MUSIC

"I feel energized here. I think it's because the teachers really care."

MAYRA, MARWEN



PHOTO: MARWEN, CHICAGO, IL

CONNECTING WITH ADOLESCENTS

Adolescents are neither old children nor young adults, but individuals with their own multifaceted developmental needs. Engaging them effectively requires an awareness of these needs, so that programs can be designed to give them more meaningful experiences and a stronger voice in community arts education.

UNDERSTAND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

Adolescence is a social construction as much as a stage of life, a classification invented by members of a particular culture or society and affected by age, culture, race, gender, and class structures. You need to become aware of your own concepts about what adolescents are or should be, since these concepts frame the way you build programs and interact with youth.

Knowledge of developmental needs also must inform the design and development of your program. The key developmental tasks of adolescents (youth between 13 and 18) are:

- ➔ **FORMING AN IDENTITY.** Adolescents explore alternative belief systems, occupations, personal values, and sexual activities and orientations. Artistic practices can help them think of themselves as viable contributors and agents of change, both within their programs and in their home communities.
- ➔ **DEVELOPING AND MASTERING LIFE SKILLS.** Adolescents refine their sense of intellectual curiosity and exploration. They begin to describe their vision of a productive future and the skills they will need for education and work. They acquire greater understanding



“I realized that the training that I received was not just about the arts, but about developing as a person.”

YOUNG ARTIST, MOSAIC YOUTH THEATRE OF DETROIT

of society, including respect for diversity, desire for community involvement, and appreciation for positive social networks.

- ➔ **FINDING A SENSE OF PLACE.** Adolescents explore options for the right fit with their environment—physical spaces, family units, social groups, and wider communities. They learn how to form healthy relationships, use support systems, and find ways to be useful to others.

PHOTO: MOSAIC YOUTH THEATRE OF DETROIT, DETROIT, MI

CONNECTING WITH ADOLESCENTS

According to the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, to grow into responsible, informed, and caring adults, teens “must find ways to earn respect, establish a sense of belonging in a valued group, and build a sense of personal worth based on mastery of useful skills, including social skills. They must learn the peaceful management of conflict, the elements of ethical behavior, and how to use the social support systems available to them.”¹⁰ Arts education programs that integrate youth development provide a framework within which adolescents can accomplish these tasks.

FOCUS ON YOUTH ASSETS AND POTENTIAL

To create conditions that enable adolescents to see themselves as viable shapers of their lives and communities, adult program developers, administrators, and teaching artists need to dismantle negative perceptions of teens. Conceptual models of adolescence often focus on the stressful, unpredictable, and turbulent aspects of the transition from childhood to adulthood, rather than on adolescents’ potential. In fact, youth have a remarkable capacity to imagine and experiment with new ideas and partnerships and take positive risks. Understanding what goes on during this

pivotal period of individual development and building programs that promote adolescents’ assets will enable your organization to benefit from teens’ high levels of energy, creativity, and commitment.

PLAN AROUND COMPETING DEMANDS

Twenty-first-century adolescents live at a dizzying pace. One reason teens are typically perceived as difficult to attract and retain is that a multitude of demands and choices compete for their attention. These are both externally imposed (schoolwork or childcare responsibilities) and internally driven (school-sponsored extracurricular activities and socializing with friends). Instead of writing off this audience as uninterested and hard to recruit, examine what competes for their attention. When

you understand how teens spend their time, you can think about what program approaches are compatible with their habits and interests and what options will realistically fit into schedules crowded with school, family, and work demands.

SCHOOL

While classroom time technically does not “compete” for teens’ attention, proposals to extend the school day could affect out-of-school programs. Many charter schools have adopted longer school days and years, and some public school systems have proposed extending school time for all public school students. This change

➔ CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

“Ifetayo’s arts programming is tied into rites of passage programming, moving a child through adolescence into adulthood. For example, they learn specific types of dances, songs, and rhythms that reinforce core values. We teach the dances, then have a discussion and write life plans with the focus of remaining a community and what that means. The ultimate goal is for students to remain connected and hold themselves accountable to high standards.”

KWAYERA ARCHER-CUNNINGHAM, PRESIDENT AND CEO,
IFETAYO CULTURAL ARTS ACADEMY



PHOTO: IFETAYO CULTURAL ARTS ACADEMY, BROOKLYN, NY

SITAR EMERGING ARTS LEADERS

SITAR ARTS CENTER

WASHINGTON, DC

Teens are a significant audience for the multidisciplinary Sitar Arts Center, which offers an afterschool safe haven with high-quality arts education, positive adult relationships, and opportunities for individual growth through the arts.

More than 750 students, from six-year-olds to adults and mostly from low-income households, participate in dance, drama, digital arts, music, visual arts, and writing classes. A volunteer faculty comes from Sitar's extensive Washington, DC, network of individuals and organizations.

Like many community arts education organizations, Sitar was looking for ways to keep adolescents engaged. For Sitar, however, engagement has greater urgency because it means providing a constructive alternative to a strong network of neighborhood gangs. The Sitar Emerging Arts Leaders (S.E.A.L.) Program, launched in 2009, gives 12- to 18-year-olds the chance to focus on one art form, gain and strengthen artistic skills, and prepare for continued studies in the arts. S.E.A.L. is highly structured and goal oriented, with a three-stage program of courses, volunteer hours, field trips, meetings, and independent projects that culminates in a certificate. Each stage adds new challenges and deeper engagement. Spring and summer internships teach teens more about the inner workings of Sitar.

S.E.A.L. is geared toward building self-confidence, leadership, and future goals in the context of arts learning. Teens choose a major area

of interest—visual arts, performing arts, digital technical arts, creative writing, multidisciplinary arts, or an open major—and are assigned an advisor knowledgeable in that area. Before advancing to the next program stage they must complete specific requirements each semester, including classes in their major, at least two reflection workshops a month, community service hours, and a writing component. Self-motivation is important. Sitar gives teens support, tools, and



PHOTO: SITAR ARTS CENTER, WASHINGTON, DC

SITAR EMERGING ARTS LEADERS

opportunities and expects them to stay on track in completing the requirements.

Once a week, teens get together for refreshments and socializing at S.E.A.L. Social Hour, followed by an hour-long reflection workshop. Each workshop focuses on a theme relevant to teens' lives, usually decided by staff, such as leadership, self-esteem, relationship building, financial literacy, or college planning. Teens work on problem-solving exercises in pairs or groups, and their peers on the S.E.A.L. Leadership Council lead workshop segments. They get to know each other in an environment set up to encourage social interaction and, over time, build a network of mutual support.

Teens' positive response to S.E.A.L. shows in multiple ways. They help build the program by encouraging friends to join. Some assist with events and classes, help younger students, and work with staff. Others have joined the Leadership Council or held internships. Loretta Thompson, Sitar's director of program operations, describes the feeling of belonging that S.E.A.L. creates: "Students come to the program knowing maybe one other person and end the semester with more than seven or eight new friends who share their

interests. One student in particular was very timid at first. Now he speaks up in workshops and looks for other opportunities to spend time at Sitar."

ENGAGEMENT ADVICE

→ **USE AN INCENTIVE PLAN.** Build in incentives and requirements that encourage self-motivation, organization, and leadership. Sitar staff advisors meet regularly with individual students to monitor their progress, guide them toward other learning experiences in their fields of interest, and talk about college options. Sequential requirements can work with some teens and be hard for others to attain. One first-semester S.E.A.L. student finished an independent study that wasn't required until the second stage of the program.

→ **BE MINDFUL OF TEENS' OTHER COMMITMENTS.** The S.E.A.L. requirements and timeline are designed to fit students' personal schedules. Teens need time for homework, other school activities, family responsibilities, and often part-time jobs. With staff permission, teens can put their S.E.A.L. involvement on hold, with the opportunity to return to the program if they can adhere to the requirements.

→ **MAKE THE EXPERIENCE HIGHLY INTERACTIVE.** Sitar builds teens' confidence and enthusiasm by making the environment friendly, open, participatory, and fun. Teens need interaction instead of passive listening. Invite their feedback on program goals, structure, content, and effectiveness. Be sure to incorporate their feedback in planning content and implementing changes in the program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Sitar Arts Center

1700 Kalorama Road, NW
Washington, DC 20009

www.sitarartscenter.org

CONNECTING WITH ADOLESCENTS

could mean more available time for arts education programming in the extended school day, but it could also cut into the time students have available for activities in nonschool settings.

OUTSIDE SCHOOL

For many adolescents, afternoons, weekends, summer, and unsupervised hours are largely “free time” that lacks the productive collaboration with adults that most teens crave and the immersion in consistent activities that promote their creative and civic potential. Often, this time is spent exclusively with peers and siblings or in social isolation. For some, out-of-school time is tightly scheduled with extracurricular school activities, sports, and homework. Many others spend out-of-school time on work, childcare responsibilities, or other family

obligations. Community arts education providers can find a niche by assessing the extracurricular, work, and family responsibilities of target audiences and designing teen program content and schedules for the greatest possible access.

INTERNET AND MOBILE

There is a third competitor for adolescents’ time and attention: online and mobile communication. A national survey of 8- to 18-year-olds by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that the amount of time they spend online with entertainment media has risen dramatically, to an average 7 hours and 38 minutes a day. Home Internet access remains lower for minorities and low-income households, but cell phone access may be narrowing the digital divide;

a Pew Internet and American Life study showed that 41 percent of teens from households earning \$30,000 and less use their cell phones to go online.¹¹ Marketing and engagement strategies for community arts education programs must take into account teens’ preferences and affinity for cell and online interaction. Teens themselves will be key partners in deciding how, when, and how much to integrate social and entertainment media into programming, marketing, and overall engagement.

The Walker Art Center chooses not to identify teens as “at risk,” instead aiming for socioeconomic, geographic, and racial diversity in its teen programs. Any teen can face challenges in developing and mastering the skills they need to thrive and succeed. The Walker nurtures life skills by linking teens to artist mentors and teachers, giving young artists opportunities to present their work, and developing leadership skills and career aspirations through internships and Teen Advisory Council membership.



PHOTO: WALKER ART CENTER TEEN PROGRAMS, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

THREE

CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR DEEPER YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Any successful teen engagement program must be founded on three core components. As you plan, think about how you will provide for organizational commitment, youth empowerment, and a supportive environment. These components form the foundation for the strategies described in chapter 4.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

LONG-TERM INVESTMENT. Meaningful arts education for adolescents comes from investing in the youth audience for the long haul, not just in response to an appealing grant opportunity. Consistent work over time gives an organization the chance to learn from experience, deepen impact, and build participation. More important, the young people you want to engage need to know that you are inviting them into a lasting relationship, not a drive-by encounter.

INTERNAL SUPPORT AND INTEREST. Outstanding youth engagement programs are central to an organization's mission and vision and match its organizational culture. Enthusiasm for serving teens permeates the organization, beyond the particular division responsible for program delivery.

CLEAR PROGRAM GOALS AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS.

As in all program initiatives, program planning begins with basic questions about mission, target audience, goals, and impact. Clarity of purpose is especially important for capturing adolescents' attention and earning their trust. They respond best to straightforward structures and content that speaks to them in their language.

“ In the African tradition, we embrace all of our children and families by welcoming them to a place where they can explore the ‘what ifs,’ with a staff dedicated to their well-being. The care and compassion our students receive help them to learn the answers to the ‘what ifs’ as well as many other important life questions. ”

IFETAYO CULTURAL ARTS ACADEMY

CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR DEEPER YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



THE RIGHT STAFF. Successful teaching artists and other program staff genuinely enjoy working with teenagers. They reflect the diversity of the students and the community, and they have the personal qualities—including warmth, respect, flexibility, and negotiating and organizational skills—that make them effective teachers and mentors for this age group. In addition to teaching artists, you will need to look for staff such as counselors or social workers who understand youth development issues and can work with teens to provide additional support.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

FOCUS ON STUDENT SUCCESS. Every aspect of the program—including physical space, program design and content, and instruction—is geared to help students develop and believe in their own competence. Marwen speaks of “a culture of confidence building.” Students come to recognize that they can relate to peers and adults, solve problems, learn new information, take on challenges, and benefit from mistakes.

YOUTH-DRIVEN PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES. Teens are active resources, contributing to process as well as product and consulting on matters that affect them. Genuine empowerment depends on this approach, which promotes individual expression, leverages individual life skills, and builds relationships. Choice and independence are important, but structure and guidance are also built in. Adults provide the critical balance; “guide, don’t rule” is a basic principle of the Walker Art Center’s teen programs.

TEAMWORK AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY. Teamwork among teens and adults helps young people practice articulating ideas, developing and explaining strategies, considering different scenarios, and considering “what if?”—opportunities they may not have in other settings. Offering young people responsible roles creates rich environments for learning, achievement, and growth. Working with peers and adults, they also learn relationship skills, such as communication, judgment, and collaboration.

➞ CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

PHOTO: CHRISTINA CULTURAL ARTS CENTER, WILMINGTON, DE

MACPHAIL TEEN ADVISORY COUNCIL

MACPHAIL CENTER FOR MUSIC

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

MacPhail Center for Music, one of the nation's largest and most respected community music schools, enrolls teens in individual lessons, classes, and ensembles. As in many organizations, retention is an issue. MacPhail wants to hold teens' interest through the high school years and into adulthood. After observing the success of the Walker Art Center's teen advisory group, MacPhail decided to launch its own.

The MacPhail Teen Advisory Council, or MACTAC, was designed with both youth engagement and youth development in mind. The staff wants to change youth perceptions of MacPhail, making it the “cool place” for music education in the Twin Cities. They hope MACTAC will create higher visibility and greater relevance among teens. An important companion goal is building participants' life skills—leadership, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity.

To launch MACTAC, 12 enthusiastic high school students were chosen by application and interview. Most are MacPhail students, but a few are new to the organization. The group is diverse, with interests in all musical styles and genres. In September 2010, MACTAC began monthly



meetings with MacPhail's community liaison. Attendance is required, and teens receive a stipend of \$15 for each 90-minute meeting— along with pizza, an essential ingredient for any successful teen advisory council.

PHOTO: MACPHAIL CENTER FOR MUSIC, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

MACPHAIL TEEN ADVISORY COUNCIL

Marketing MacPhail's teen programs was the focus of MACTAC's first year. The group reviewed and made recommendations about the program catalogue and summer camp offerings. At one meeting they discussed MacPhail's image among teens in the community. At another, they brainstormed musical genres for new programming and local musicians who would make good teaching artists. Over time, MACTAC plans to expand its scope to organize and design new teen programs in collaboration with staff.

Working with the development team, MACTAC has begun planning and conducting a student giving campaign—and in the process, learning how a community arts education organization works. They worked alongside staff to plan the campaign, develop materials, and consider potential business partners. Funds raised will go to individual lesson scholarships.

ENGAGEMENT ADVICE

- ➔ **BE WILLING TO EXPERIMENT.** If you are not sure where to begin engaging teens, explore models in other organizations and try a pilot program. The MacPhail staff adopted basic principles and logistical ideas from the neighboring Walker Art Center but developed their own goals. After MACTAC's first year, they will reflect on their experience and plan for the future.
- ➔ **LET TEENS BE LEADERS.** Teens express an abundance of ideas and opinions. Show them that you care what they think and how they feel about the organization. One goal of MACTAC is to solicit teen feedback about MacPhail based on their own experiences and their peers' perceptions. You will not be able to implement every suggestion, but you will build an atmosphere of trust.

- ➔ **CONSULT TEENS ABOUT TECHNOLOGY DECISIONS.** They know what works and what doesn't—not just for their peers but for other audiences. For the redesign of MacPhail's website, MACTAC gave good feedback about design, content, links, music, and other elements of a new Students' Corner feature.
- ➔ **SHOW TEENS HOW YOUR ORGANIZATION WORKS.** Youth can be future nonprofit arts professionals as well as future artists. Spark their interest by introducing them to basic management principles: where the money comes from, how marketing decisions are made, what characteristics make a good teaching artist, and what is involved in program design.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

MacPhail Center for Music

501 South 2nd Street
Minneapolis, MN 55401

www.macphail.org

CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR DEEPER YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

COMFORTABLE SPACES. The organization has gathering and creating spaces—real and virtual—that teens can make their own. The environment—ideally, planned by teens—is conducive to both work and socializing. Social media extend the notion of student-developed spaces that build community.

ATTITUDES TOWARD YOUNG PEOPLE THAT INSPIRE THEIR SUCCESS. Everyone adolescents encounter in the organization treats them with respect and inspires a sense of belonging. There is a deeply held belief that every student can succeed, no matter what his or her personal challenges, if there is honest effort. Students are comfortable with giving and receiving critique and recognize its value to the creative process. Each student and staff member embraces diversity.

SUSTAINED INVOLVEMENT WITH ADULTS. Meaningful connections with adult mentors, experienced students, and alumni provide instruction, coaching, encouragement, and evaluation across a wide range of roles and responsibilities and offer the potential for long-term trusting relationships and alliances. These sustained relationships are especially important for teens.

OPPORTUNITIES TO CELEBRATE ACCOMPLISHMENT. Students have ongoing opportunities to share work through performances and exhibitions. These occasions instill pride in self and others, build self-esteem, and emphasize the value of hard work and follow-through.

“The environment—ideally, planned by teens—is conducive to both work and socializing.”



PHOTO: CRESCENDO ACADEMY OF MUSIC, KALAMAZOO, MI. PHOTOGRAPHER: KEITH EVERETT JONES.

BERKLEE CITY MUSIC

BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Berklee City Music invites teens into an educational environment renowned for its focus on contemporary music, blending instruction and performance opportunities with adult and peer relationships that help them grow as individuals.

Students arrive with their instruments and a passion for music, but often without much formal background. After their City Music experience, some continue on to professional training, and others enjoy music as a lifelong pursuit.

Berklee City Music began on a modest scale in 1991 as a five-week summer performance program at Boston's Berklee College of Music, offering scholarships for a few talented high school students. Enthusiasm was so great that City Music became year-round, expanded to include middle-school students, and created a spin-off nationwide program, Berklee City Music Network, that serves youth in nearly 30 arts organizations. Four tuition-free programs taught by college faculty and BCM alumni serve hundreds of Boston-area students every year: City Music Mentoring Program for grades 7–12, a Saturday preparatory academy for grades 6–8, an advanced, intensive after-school academy for grades 9–12, and faculty outreach for grades 4–12 in Boston public schools. Two competitive scholarships enable selected students to attend the summer performance program and enroll as undergraduates in Berklee College of Music.



PHOTO: BERKLEE CITY MUSIC, BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC, BOSTON, MA

BERKLEE CITY MUSIC

Teens at City Music are dedicated to their music, and the goal-oriented environment encourages them to develop high aspirations for performing, composing, conducting, and teaching. Beginning students often lack self-confidence in their artistic abilities, but high-quality, one-on-one instruction and adult mentoring gradually change that. Learning continues beyond the four hours a week teens typically spend in formal programs. With their Berklee College IDs, students have access to all facilities and resources. They can hang out on campus with their peers and use practice rooms, the media center, and the library. This independence contributes to the confidence building and empowerment that is an important ingredient of the City Music strategy.

ENGAGEMENT ADVICE

- ➔ **PROMOTE OPEN, HONEST COMMUNICATION.** Teens appreciate candor from adults and their peers. They want you to communicate with them in a real and respectful way, without soft selling or ambiguity. Letting teens be heard allows them to test and develop their own voices. Listen to their ideas and opinions, but also know when it is appropriate to step in and guide them in a different direction.
- ➔ **ESTABLISH PURPOSE AND DIRECTION.** An essential factor in sustaining engagement is the sense of purpose and direction that City Music promotes among teens. Teens thrive when they have something to work toward and when expectations are high. City Music celebrates accomplishment in performances, completion ceremonies, and awards given by teachers and peers.

- ➔ **CREATE A SAFE AND RESPECTFUL FAMILY ATMOSPHERE.** City Music promotes teamwork in a communal environment that helps teens feel validated, empowered, and part of something important. Instead of typical teacher-student instructional relationships, peer and mentor relationships with adults are the norm. The music itself—popular music rooted in the African diaspora—is grounded in communal traditions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Berklee City Music

Berklee College of Music

1140 Boylston Street, MS-899 EDCOM
Boston, MA 02215

www.berklee.edu/community/citymusic.html

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

This chapter outlines the basic strategies of engaging adolescents in high-quality arts programs—from deciding what needs you will address, to designing actual programs and choosing adult teachers and mentors, to sustaining engagement through marketing and evaluation.

Creating and performing art requires pushing boundaries and taking risks. High-quality arts education programs for teens ask them not only to learn new skills but to take positive risks by engaging in new modes of self-expression at a critical juncture in their identity development. Teens should be challenged not just artistically but in a broad range of activities related to administering and governing the program. Students derive great benefit when programs are sustained and learning opportunities are appropriate for their age group.

Programs that engage adolescents take time to plan, implement, and incorporate into the fabric of the organization. It is not unusual to spend a year or two from idea to launch, especially if your organization has not involved a teen audience in the past. Even then, a program will evolve as students and staff work together in a continuous cycle of evaluation and improvement. Engaging arts education programs are not static. They develop over time.

Some programs—especially for young people from economically disadvantaged communities—will not be financially self sustaining. They require ongoing fundraising, marketing, and engagement efforts. You can create visibility for a program among prospective partners, funders, and students by sharing the process through which teens learn and grow—not just presenting a finished piece or polished performance, but making the entire process public. The full impact of deep engagement is especially evident when teens take on active leadership roles—through a youth advisory council, for example.

“There is a teen version and an adult version for everything. Reality is somewhere in the middle.”

WALKER ART CENTER, A TEEN PROGRAMS HOW-TO KIT

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT



You will not necessarily move in a step-by-step fashion toward a full-blown, successful program or initiative. Instead, the following list of practices will help you cover all the bases, making sure

that the aspiration to engage teen audiences is realistic, that visioning, planning, and marketing are careful and intentional, and that you focus on involving, empowering, and supporting teens.

- ➔ Assess the need.
- ➔ Identify barriers to participation.
- ➔ Create a youth advisory council.
- ➔ Design engaging, high-interest programs for and with teens.
- ➔ Choose teaching artists and staff who enjoy working with teens.
- ➔ Explore partnerships.
- ➔ Create a welcoming environment.
- ➔ Develop the right marketing and recruitment strategies.
- ➔ Evaluate to invigorate teen programs and promote retention.

ASSESS THE NEED

Conducting a needs assessment and mapping existing assets in the community that you plan to serve will set the foundation for a successful program. Needs assessment and asset mapping help you determine what teens want and need, identify programs and services that are available, attended, and accessible to adolescents at different developmental levels within a neighborhood (or other geographic area), and identify any gaps in creative learning services. These assessments also reveal barriers to participation in community arts education—real and perceived—that can be problematic when you are trying to serve a teen audience, especially for the first time.

The goal is to align interest and demand with what is relevant to teens in a particular community. Not all programs are relevant in the same way to all adolescents. Involving teens, their parents, and other adults who work with teens in your assessment will help you segment the potential audience and make well-informed program decisions. Taking the time to identify needs will help ensure that there is strong demand for what you have to offer. Teens will be more likely to participate, and prospective funders and partner organizations

will be more likely to support your efforts. Remember that communities change over time, so needs assessment is not a one-time process.

Based on the needs assessment and asset mapping exercises, you will be able to describe at least in a preliminary way what audience you will serve, using demographic characteristics such as age and geographic area. Will you focus on high school students only, or will you include younger teens? Will you expand or enrich existing programs or start new ones? Is this an opportunity to reach a more diverse population than you currently serve?

“The goal is to align interest and demand with what is relevant to teens in a particular community.”

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

TIPS: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- ➔ **CONDUCT FOCUS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS** with current and prospective students, parents and guardians, educators, alumni, partners, and funders, as well as with staff and educators in community organizations, the school system, and youth services agencies. Gather their perspectives on what teens want and need. The teens who are involved at this stage will form a pool for selecting a youth advisory group later in the planning process.
- ➔ **SURVEY TEENS**, using information gleaned from focus groups and interviews to shape your survey questions, and consult teens in the design and execution of the survey. If you have the funds, involve a researcher in survey design and interpretation. Marketing or arts administration students from your local university or members of Business Volunteers for the Arts can be helpful as well. When possible, use teens as facilitators, creating deeper trust and a sense of involvement.
- ➔ **REVIEW OTHER EVALUATION DATA** from existing or prior programs to glean insights into what has worked, what's been missing, and what might need changing. These data can also inform the design of the survey questions.

**TIPS: EFFECTIVE SURVEYS**

- ➔ **BETA-TEST THE SURVEY.** Does it make sense to survey participants? Does it give you the information you're looking for?
- ➔ **DISTRIBUTE THE SURVEY WIDELY.** Online tools are powerful, affordable, and easy to use. Ask teens from your focus groups to forward the survey to their friends. Consult your organization's faculty, staff, and families for ideas. Contact partner schools, other arts education organizations, youth groups, and social service organizations.

TIPS: ASSET MAPPING

- ➔ **IDENTIFY EXISTING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES** in the community to learn what arts education resources are available to adolescents and where gaps in service exist. Ask about existing programs when conducting your interviews, focus groups, and/or surveys.
- ➔ **THINK ABOUT HOW YOU COULD FILL THE GAPS.** What kind of programming is your organization best at? What aligns with your mission? How do your strengths match the needs you've identified?
- ➔ **CONSIDER THE PARTNERING POTENTIAL.** Would it be best to partner with an existing program, approach a partner organization about a joint venture, or start something new on your own?

RESOURCES

Johanna Misey Boyer, "Internal and External Assessment," *Creativity Matters: The Arts and Aging Toolkit*, National Guild, www.artsandaging.org/index.php?id=83#conducting

Lionel J. Beaulieu, *Mapping the Assets of Your Community* (Southern Rural Development Center), http://srdc.msstate.edu/trainings/educurricula/asset_mapping/

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

IDENTIFY BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Launching programs and relationships with teens requires respecting, working around, and overcoming barriers to participation. When you serve youth in disadvantaged communities, you face special economic, educational, experiential, and logistical barriers. If you wait until a program is under way to understand what the barriers are and why they exist, it may be too late to respond. Instead, it's important to use needs assessment, asset mapping, and dialogue among staff, community networks, partner organizations, and potential teen participants to uncover all the possible barriers before you move ahead. In particular, ask teens who are already involved in your organization to help you come up with solutions. Ideas and strategies described in the rest of this chapter also address the issue of what keeps teens away. It's not enough to assume; you need to ask.

“Barriers of the mind are less visible but no less important to understand.”

LOGISTICAL BARRIERS are usually concrete issues.

The location and image of your facility and neighborhood will affect how participants get there and whether they feel welcome. Work and family responsibilities, as well as other scheduled activities, might get in the way of participation in afterschool programs. The language of your target audience could affect their understanding of program marketing materials. Program cost and affordability can be a significant barrier.

BARRIERS OF THE MIND are less visible but no less important to understand. Some teens may believe that the arts are only for certain people, so you will need to bridge the racial, cultural, and economic divides that create this barrier. Others may feel that they aren't creative, can't make art, or won't be able to learn choreography or perform for an audience. Still others may perceive an organization or program as just another place where adults will tell them what to do and expect them to adapt to a prescribed role. Building confidence and self-esteem is a major component of working with this age group, among whom self-consciousness and doubts about one's own competence are common. In marketing, use messages that express respect and encouragement for those who may lack



confidence in their creative potential. Linking with community partner organizations that teens are familiar with is one way to break the ice, communicate a more welcoming message, and demystify the organization and its programs.

PHOTO: PERFORMING ARTS WORKSHOP, SAN FRANCISCO, CA. PHOTOGRAPHER: TERESA KENNETT.

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

TIPS: BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

- ➔ **ANALYZE THE CONVENIENCE AND ACCESS OF YOUR LOCATION.** How will teens get there? Is it easily accessible to public transportation? Are your facilities accessible to people with disabilities? Consider going to your audience instead of asking them to come to you; think about holding programs in a community center, church, school, or partner organization's facility.
- ➔ **FIND OUT ABOUT FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES** like afterschool jobs and childcare or eldercare responsibilities at home. Some teens have trouble fitting afterschool activities into their daily schedules. What times work best for them? How does your anticipated schedule—afterschool, weekends, summer, or all three—affect your potential audiences?
- ➔ **EDUCATE PARENTS** so they can better understand and support their teens' involvement and not view it as time away from obligations.

- ➔ **ANALYZE THE ATMOSPHERE OF YOUR LOCATION.** Is it safe and inviting? Will your facility feel too “fancy” and off-putting? Or might drug or gang activity make a neighborhood feel unsafe to teens and their families?
- ➔ **BROADEN LANGUAGE COMPETENCY.** Will the program serve young people who are not fluent in English? Is program information available to them in their languages? Can you conduct the program in languages and dialects spoken in the communities you serve? Make sure that written materials are correct, with accurate translations.
- ➔ **PROGRAM COST**—including program fees, materials fees, and transportation—may prevent teens from participating, especially in economically disadvantaged areas. How can you make your programs low-cost or free? Will you have scholarships available, or can you charge on a sliding scale?

RESOURCES

Tawana Bandy, et al., “Non-Participation of Children and Adolescents in Out-of-School Time Programs: Child, Family and Neighborhood Factors,” *Child Trends Research-to-Results Brief*, www.childtrends.org/files/child_trends-2009_07_22_rb_nonparticipation.pdf.

“Engagement Strategies: Barriers to Inclusion and Engagement,” Community Engagement, National Guild Community Arts Education Resource Center, resourcecenter.nationalguild.org/Topics/Community-Engagement.aspx (National Guild members only).

Mary Terzian, et al., “Why Teens Are Not Involved in Out-of-School Time Programs: The Youth Perspective,” *Child Trends Research-to-Results Brief*, www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2009_07_22_RB_YouthRoundtable.pdf.

Donna Walker-Kuhne, *Invitation to the Party: Building Bridges to the Arts, Culture, and Community* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005).

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IFETAYO YOUTH ENSEMBLE

IFETAYO CULTURAL ARTS ACADEMY

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

For youth and families in the Brooklyn community of Flatbush and surrounding neighborhoods, Ifetayo Cultural Arts Academy is a consistent, positive force for creative, personal, and academic achievement. In seven major programs that involve more than 800 students, the visual and performing arts go hand in hand with promoting self-awareness, knowledge of African culture, a sense of community, and belief in mutual respect.

The Ifetayo Youth Ensemble (IYE), a pre-professional program for young people ages 11 to 21, blends artistic, emotional, and personal growth with rigorous training in African dance, African drumming, modern dance, or acting. Thirty to 40 members, selected by audition and awarded full artistic scholarships, devote 8 to 10 hours a week to the Ensemble, with added time for research and field trips. In performances throughout the community, IYE presents its own original works that address critical social issues, as well as its interpretations of works by leading choreographers.

Ifetayo sets serious expectations for ensemble members in the belief that artistic and life challenges encourage personal growth. “We offer artistic training at high levels within a supportive community,” says president and CEO Kwayera



Archer-Cunningham, who founded the organization in 1989. A healthy part of the artistic challenge comes from the teens themselves, who push one another to higher levels of skill and performance. Ensemble members are required to join the Rites of Passage program, which teaches goal setting, health and wellness, financial literacy, and community responsibility. Teens set up college savings funds, and each time they perform their stipends go into their funds. The organization matches personal contributions two to one.

PHOTO: IFETAYO CULTURAL ARTS ACADEMY, BROOKLYN, NY. PHOTOGRAPHER: MARTIN DIXON.

IFETAYO YOUTH ENSEMBLE

Positive relationships with adults are a major strength of Ifetayo. “Many young people say that’s why they love coming here,” Archer-Cunningham observes. Every adult who works with IYE has a talent for mentoring and coaching. “We’re on the sidelines, giving them room and support to grown as young adults.” This support makes Ifetayo a safe place where risk taking is encouraged and failure is a learning experience.

Teaching artists are expected to make a 42-week commitment to the program, so they are usually in the second phase of their careers, with fewer touring and performance demands. The ensemble’s six teachers receive intensive training in working with teens. A culture of reflective learning, including extensive staff development and monthly planning meetings, keeps them inspired. As a condition of employment, they agree to evaluate ensemble members monthly, using an electronic system.

Teens’ commitment during and after their involvement in Ifetayo Youth Ensemble, and in Ifetayo in general, is an indicator of success. Many remain members of the ensemble for five to seven years. IYE’s active alumni serve as audition panel members, teaching artists, volunteers, and board members.

ENGAGEMENT ADVICE

- ➔ **SET THE BAR HIGH.** The Ifetayo Youth Ensemble is rigorous in every way: high-caliber artistic training, professional-level performance, and demanding personal commitments. Treating teens with respect for their potential promotes self-confidence and nurtures leadership potential.
- ➔ **PROVIDE STAFF DEVELOPMENT.** Positive adult relationships are critical to engaging adolescents. For maximum impact on teens, involve adults who have the experience, enthusiasm, and time to work with them. Make an investment in recruitment, training, and ongoing professional development for all teaching artists and program leaders.
- ➔ **CONNECT ARTS AND COMMUNITY.** Ifetayo views youth as cultural agents with the power to make a difference in their communities. Original performance pieces are grounded in the group’s collaborative explorations of their cultural identity, both traditional and contemporary, and in their feelings about social, economic, and political issues. They take away an understanding of the arts as a tool for civic dialogue, social change, and community development.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Ifetayo Cultural Arts Academy

629 E. 35th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11203

www.ifetayo.org

PHOTO: IFETAYO CULTURAL ARTS ACADEMY, BROOKLYN, NY. PHOTOGRAPHER: MARTIN DIXON.

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

CREATE A YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

Many community arts learning programs have found that developing a youth advisory council is extremely helpful. A formal advisory group creates the sense of involvement and empowerment that is so important to genuine engagement and long-term success with adolescents. Your intent should be to create a mutually rewarding relationship. Teen advisors have multiple roles that evolve as your organization's programming and level of engagement develop. They are the core of the community you hope to build for adolescents and the starting point for your engagement effort. They may participate in program design, branding and messaging, marketing and recruitment, evaluation, and more. In the process, they build leadership skills, serve as peer mentors,

MacPhail Center for Music turned to its Minneapolis neighbor, the Walker Art Center, as a model when determining the need for a youth advisory group. The MacPhail staff sensed a useful purpose for such a group, and the Walker's long-term experience helped them adapt the idea to fit their own organization. In the future, the group itself will probably get involved in informal needs assessment to decide on future teen programming at MacPhail.

and assume responsibility for artistic, educational, and administrative elements of the program. Over time, current and former advisors can be powerful spokespersons for your organization and symbols of your commitment to the artistic and personal development of this audience.

TIPS: YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCILS

- ➔ **DECIDE ON MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA.** Organizations with successful youth advisory councils recommend beginning with teens who have had some involvement with the organization as students or through a school program. Charter members of the Walker Art Center's Teen Arts Council were at the same developmental stage (14 to 16 years old), lived close enough to arrange their own transportation to meetings, and represented a cross-section of the Minneapolis–St. Paul population.
- ➔ **IDENTIFY POTENTIAL MEMBERS FROM YOUR FOCUS, INTERVIEW, AND SURVEY GROUPS.** For the first year of the council, it makes sense to hand-pick teens who are respected by their peers and enthusiastic about working with you. Conduct interviews, decide on a tentative meeting schedule, and make the group's goals and attendance expectations clear. Consider seeking parental support and buy-in for their teen's participation.



- ➔ **INVOLVE MEMBERS IN DECISION MAKING ABOUT THE ADVISORY COUNCIL'S ROLE.** Outline your organization's goals for the group, but invite members to create a plan for its work. Find a balance between too much structure and too much freedom. You will be showing teens what it means to work within the mission and context of an organization, and they will learn about teamwork, consensus, and compromise.

➔ CONTINUED ON PAGE 36

PHOTO: CANADA'S NATIONAL BALLET SCHOOL, TORONTO, ON. PHOTOGRAPHER: CYLLA VON TIEDEMANN.

WALKER ART CENTER TEEN PROGRAMS

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

Walker Art Center was the first art museum in the country to devote full-time staff to engaging and working with teen audiences. The Walker's teen programming, which started in 1994, is solidly rooted in the museum.

Passionate support from then-director Kathy Halbreich, who was committed to community engagement on many different levels, helped get the idea off the ground. Teen art workshops, exhibitions, and internships are ongoing, not episodic programs, and the Student Open House is an eagerly awaited annual event.

Widely respected in the field, the Walker's teen programs have inspired many others in arts organizations across the country. The Walker's *Teen Programs How-To Kit* offers clear, pithy pointers on engaging adolescents, from planning new programs to keeping them engaged over time.

Engagement work takes place on a variety of levels at the Walker, from “gateway” programs that bring young people into the museum for the first time, to public programs aimed at teens, to an active workshop and exhibition program that offers opportunities for intensive learning from professional artists and staff curators. The Walker Art Center Teen Arts Council (WACTAC), which has been a model for other organizations, helps the museum attract a teen audience and create comfortable, welcoming spaces and programs for them. WACTAC's work is a case study in how arts learning can help teens build important life skills



through collaborative decision making, youth empowerment, and leadership development.

“Part of engaging teens is to respond to current needs and be innovative in your approach,” says Adriana Rimpel, program manager, teen programs. The Walker's model has been instrumental in supporting teens' creative development, but as the museum approaches the end of its second decade of working with teens, the staff is keeping an open mind about possibilities for new approaches in the future.

PHOTO: WALKER ART CENTER, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

WALKER ART CENTER TEEN PROGRAMS

ENGAGEMENT ADVICE

- **GUIDE, DON'T RULE.** Teens are caught in an awkward divide between childhood and adulthood. They can also sense an adult agenda a thousand miles away. Teens want programs that have some relevance to their lives as they perceive them. We may want their zine to look like it was produced by a group of teenage modernists, while they want it to look like it was produced by a bunch of teenage anarchists. Give teens input into the process, not just the product. Allow them to participate in shaping and running an event or a project.
- **EMPOWER TEENS, BUT BE PREPARED FOR WHAT HAPPENS.** There is a fine line between too much freedom and too much structure. Empowerment involves negotiation, dialogue, and sometimes compromise within the context of your organization's mission, values, and working culture.

- **RESPOND TO CURRENT NEEDS, AND ADJUST YOUR APPROACH ACCORDINGLY.** Part of engaging teens is keeping a program vibrant, responsive, and in sync with what inspires and motivates young people. From the start, integrate evaluation into your engagement efforts as a tool for planning. Set goals, outcomes, and metrics for success. Focus groups and interviews will confirm where instincts and informal feedback are accurate. Always be open to new models and practices. Make a habit of formal evaluation and informal dialogue to keep your work with teens relevant and meaningful.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Walker Art Center

1750 Hennepin Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55403

teens.walkerart.org

A Teen Programs How-To Kit,
media.walkerart.org/pdf/wac_teen_kit_booklet.pdf

PHOTO: WALKER ART CENTER, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

- ➔ **EMPOWER THE COUNCIL WITH REAL AUTHORITY.** Don't just use them as window dressing. Create a written agreement about responsibilities, just as you would for your organization's board or staff members.
- ➔ **IDENTIFY STAFF MENTORS TO WORK WITH THE ADVISORY COUNCIL.** Supportive relationships with adults are a consistent ingredient in successful youth programs. But not everyone is cut out for interacting with adolescents. Choose staff who have a sense of humor and can communicate well with this age group, inspire respect, and create a relaxed atmosphere while maintaining the structure needed to get the work done.
- ➔ **DEVELOP, REVISIT, AND REVISE THE COUNCIL'S ROLE.** Over the first year of a youth advisory council's life, expect its purpose and goals to evolve. In the beginning, you may have a more immediate agenda: brainstorming marketing approaches or developing ideas for programs that would appeal to the adolescent audience. Eventually, the group's purpose may evolve, as the Walker's did, to encompass designing teen programs in collaboration with staff, helping to market programs, and organizing its own special events for teens.

RESOURCE

"Building a Teen Arts Council," *A Teen Programs How-To Kit*, Walker Art Center, media.walkerart.org/pdf/wac_teen_kit_booklet.pdf

DESIGN ENGAGING, HIGH-INTEREST PROGRAMS FOR AND WITH TEENS

Program design for teen audiences follows familiar principles: agree on purpose, match approach and content to the target audience, define outcomes and impact, and assess effectiveness. But perhaps more than other audiences, teens need to be convinced that a program is created with them in mind and in consultation with their peers. They want experiences that have this personal connection, and they can detect well-meaning but misguided adult attempts at end-runs around teen involvement. They want to know that you respect them and are genuinely interested in what they have to say.

Knowledge of the key tasks of adolescent development should drive program design. You may want to consult with a professionally trained counselor or social worker who can help you with this aspect of program design, as well as provide support to you and your students as the program develops. High school students especially value opportunities to make their own choices, take initiative, and practice leadership skills. They need something to work toward, incentives to get



there, and rewards along the way. They also enjoy working with peers in collaborative, self-directed efforts. They respond well to programs that have positive personal as well as artistic outcomes.

In a creative writing program, for example, teachers provide the structure of a theme, instruction, and feedback, while teens choose the writing medium

PHOTO: CANADA'S NATIONAL BALLET SCHOOL, TORONTO, ON. PHOTOGRAPHER: CYLLA VON TIEDEMANN.

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

and style, decide on personal topics, work in writing groups with peers, and figure out how they would like to present their work. The program has artistic, personal, and practical impact. Teens have both the guidance and the freedom to develop and experiment with different modes of literary expression. By developing the habit of writing and sharing their work with others, teens strengthen their capacity for self-reflection, empathy, and risk taking. On the functional side, the practice of writing builds confidence and ability that supports success in school and the workplace.

Meet teens where they are, but set high artistic standards and expect the best. Ensure that both the *process* of learning and creating and the artistic *product* are of high quality. Experienced practitioners agree that the higher the bar, the more teens aspire to achieve. When thinking about how to keep teens coming back to your organization, remember that the best retention tool is an effective program.

“When thinking about how to keep teens coming back to your organization, remember that the best retention tool is an effective program.”

TIPS: PROGRAM DESIGN

➔ **KEEP IT SIMPLE.** Design program structure, class size, and class routine for easy navigation. Coordinate with the school district’s calendar and schedule program offerings around it. Set up a predictable routine that suits the program, but strike a balance between work and play. Consider how many teens you can serve in a deep and meaningful way. Keep class size small to maximize interaction with teaching artists and other adults as well as with peers.

➔ **DEFINE MEASURABLE OUTCOMES TAILORED TO TEENS.**

Keep in mind the specific needs and interests you have identified during the initial needs assessment, in ongoing conversations with the youth advisory council, and in informal work around program planning. Use a logic model that includes outcomes like these:

- ➔ Students will develop artistic skill.
- ➔ Students will develop creativity, critical thinking, and other related skills.
- ➔ Students will practice leadership and decision-making abilities.
- ➔ Students will feel support from adults and peers (personal, academic, and career development).
- ➔ Students will feel empowered (autonomy, positive risk taking, life choices, and participation in the world beyond the program).
- ➔ Students will build meaningful relationships with peers, adult mentors, and community members.

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

➔ OFFER COLLABORATIVE, YOUTH-CENTERED LEARNING.

Develop a variety of ongoing opportunities and formats to create, reflect, discuss, revise, and present—activities such as poetry critiques, ensemble work, and collaborative scriptwriting. Leadership and group decision making fall in this category, too: youth advisory council membership, peer mentoring, marketing and recruitment, hosting special events, and website development, for example.

➔ USE NEW MEDIA AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES for learning about, creating and sharing art. Invite your youth advisory council to recommend effective integration of technology and the best use of social media for marketing, communication, and sharing the creative product. Use YouTube to share performance videos, a Flickr group to document teen programs, and texting, Twitter, and Facebook for marketing.

➔ ENCOURAGE POSITIVE RISKS. Artistic and individual benefits from the holistic youth engagement approach accrue over time through a process of artistic, individual, and social development. Positive risks are part of growth—whether trying a difficult piece of music, collaborating on a group project with newly met peers, taking an unfamiliar leadership role, or performing for an audience for the first time.



RESOURCES

Johanna Misy Boyer “Program Design,” *Creativity Matters: The Arts and Aging Toolkit*, National Guild, artsandaging.org/index.php?id=49.

“Program Planning,” *Youth Arts Toolkit*, Americans for the Arts, www.artsusa.org/youtharts/planning/

“Programs,” National Guild Community Arts Education Resource Center, resourcecenter.nationalguild.org/Topics/Programs.aspx (National Guild members only).

W.K. Kellogg Foundation, *Logic Model Development Guide*, www.wkkf.org

CHOOSE TEACHING ARTISTS AND STAFF WHO ENJOY WORKING WITH TEENS

Adolescents value experiences with adults they know and trust. Not everyone enjoys or is good at working with teens, but people who have the right qualities make a critical difference in the success of the program and the lives of participants—and the wrong staff will lead to failure. Look for teaching artists and staff from within and outside your organization who have genuine respect for adolescents, believe in building on their strengths and capabilities, and set high expectations. Quite simply, they should love working with teens. They should be skilled at blending guidance with discipline, independence with structure. “Teachers and staff should see themselves not as managers who assign, supervise, and control,” says Philip Yenawine, “but as consultants who help young people learn how to do what they want to do.”¹²

Being able to design a lesson and teach adolescents individually or in a group, class, or classroom is not the only requirement. Look for teaching artists and other adults who understand and appreciate the youth development model.

PHOTO: CRESCENDO ACADEMY OF MUSIC, KALAMAZOO, MI. PHOTOGRAPHER: KEITH EVERETT JONES.

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

TIPS: THE RIGHT STAFF

- ➔ **FOCUS ON PERSONAL QUALITIES.** Adults should be able to form meaningful, respectful connections with teens. Qualities like authenticity, honesty, integrity, curiosity, personal warmth, and charisma are essential. Staff must know how to provide empathetic support while insisting on accountability.
- ➔ **EMPHASIZE STUDENT-CENTERED INVOLVEMENT.** Adults who work with teens must be able and willing to share responsibility, power, and decision-making authority with their students. They might need to let go of preconceived notions about what teens are capable of accomplishing. Teaching artists must want to collaborate with young people as co-creators rather than direct the creative process for them.
- ➔ **BE SURE TEACHERS HAVE STRONG SKILLS IN THEIR ARTISTIC DISCIPLINES.** Their experience and confidence equip them to challenge teens to develop their own skills.
- ➔ **LOOK FOR FACILITATORS AND MENTORS.** Teens respond best to adults who inspire confidence and trust through genuine communication. Teaching artists and staff should be comfortable talking with teens, not just to them. Activity should center on the students, not

on the teacher. Adults should model civility and respect while fostering respect, responsibility, and community among program participants. Help staff members strengthen their skills in this area through periodic professional development.

- ➔ **BUILD A LEARNING COMMUNITY OF TEACHING ARTISTS AND STAFF.** Provide professional development not only in arts education but also on topics related to sexuality, substance abuse, gender-related issues, bullying, and other concerns that matter to teens. Information and training on these subjects may be available through your local network of youth services providers. By considering yourself a learning community, you help develop each other's abilities and the capacity of the team.
- ➔ **ESTABLISH CONTINUITY BEYOND A PARTICULAR STAFF MEMBER.** Teens often form strong connections with teaching artists and other staff who administer teen programs. Help them build a relationship with the whole organization by involving staff from other areas.
- ➔ **HIRE A STAFF MEMBER OR CONSULTANT WITH SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT.** A professional social worker, counselor, or youth development specialist can help your program

establish a safe and supportive environment and ensure students' health and well-being. Specialists can be hired on a full-time, part-time, or as-needed basis. Responsibilities may include counseling young artists, mediating conflicts, planning and coordinating youth leadership meetings and social events, communicating with parents about youth development issues, and providing resources on a range of youth-related topics.

RESOURCES

"Faculty Professional Development," National Guild Community Arts Education Resource Center, resourcecenter.nationalguild.org/Topics/Faculty-and-Staff/Faculty-Professional-Development.aspx (National Guild members only).

A. J. Huebner et al., "Staff Development for the Youth Development Professional: A Critical Framework for Understanding the Work," *Youth and Society* 35, no. 2 (2002): 204–225.

"Supporting Teaching Artists," in Johanna Missey Boyer, *Creativity Matters: The Arts and Aging Toolkit*, National Guild, artsandaging.org/index.php?id=20.

"Team Training," *YouthArts Toolkit*, Americans for the Arts, www.americansforthearts.org/youtharts/training/

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MARWEN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

In its spacious, open facility in the River North neighborhood of downtown Chicago, Marwen brings together middle-school and high-school students from 54 of the city's 57 zip codes for experiences “about access and opportunity, development of confidence and creativity, and the benefits that can emerge with perseverance and self-realization.”



In 2010 more than 800 sixth- to twelfth-grade students filled more than 2,200 enrollments in Marwen's studio courses and its college planning and career preparation programs, while some 200 former students participated in an active alumni program. The Marwen Institute, the program arm for the study of teaching and learning in the arts, serves about 200 artists and educators. Marwen's students are all identified as underserved, and programs are offered at no charge. In the highly diverse student body, nearly 20 percent of families

have immigrated to the United States within the past five years, and they speak 22 different languages in their homes.

Working with art educator Philip Yenawine, Marwen described its philosophy and organizational methods in *Fuel: Giving Youth the Power to Succeed*, which explores essential practices for engaging young people in the visual arts while nurturing their individual development. Marwen's work is built on a matrix of related tenets that apply to any

PHOTO: MARWEN, CHICAGO, IL

MARWEN

community arts education organization: nimble systems and structures that allow young people to grow and learn; adult teachers and mentors selected for their ability to work with youth; functional, comfortable facilities; belief in the value of independence for adolescents; and commitment to helping youth see where ambition and commitment can lead them.

Marwen intentionally draws students from throughout the city, so they're likely to encounter personalities, perspectives, and ideas that they might not find in their own neighborhoods in a highly segregated city. An accessible location and welcoming building provide a secure and comfortable space for gathering with friends. The professional studio environment is conducive to learning and making art. One student echoes the enthusiasm of her peers: "Every time I walk into Marwen, something clicks inside of me. I feel energized here." Director of education Scott Lundius believes that Marwen's greatest accomplishment is the successful, creatively engaged lives of current and former students. "Our highest aim," he says, "is for them to fulfill their creative potential."

ENGAGEMENT ADVICE

- ➔ **FOSTER A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS.** Everyone who enters Marwen—students and teachers, artists and audiences, funders, board members, and staff—is a potential learner. "Surrounding students with dynamically inspired and inquisitive adults fosters an environment that both challenges and supports their creative growth," Lundius observes.
- ➔ **RECOGNIZE THAT THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT.** Let measurable success and positive community recognition inspire you to identify the next level of accomplishment. Creativity, after all, is a cycle, so Marwen's work is a dynamic process rather than a journey toward a fixed destination.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Marwen

833 North Orleans Street
Chicago, IL 60610

www.marwen.org

Fuel: Giving Youth the Power to Succeed, www.marwen.org

PHOTO: MARWEN, CHICAGO, IL

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

EXPLORE PARTNERSHIPS

Creating sustainable, worthwhile opportunities for children and youth outside the classroom is a growing national priority. Many communities are working to increase the number and quality of out-of-school programs and services, often through cross-sector alliances that link the public, private, and nonprofit sectors and extend across socioeconomic boundaries.

In some communities—especially large metropolitan areas—there will be no shortage of potential partners with complementary strengths and programs that balance out your own organization’s goals and programming. In other locales, these relationships may be harder to come by. The list of potential partners includes other arts and cultural organizations, schools and school systems, recreation departments, municipal, county, and state agencies, nonprofit youth advocacy and youth services organizations, and coalitions of any or all of these groups.

TIPS: PROGRAM PARTNERS

- ➔ **SEEK COMPLEMENTARY PARTNERS.** In an effective partnership, the match between organizations will be mutually beneficial. Think about what your organization brings to the table and what you hope to find in a partner organization. You may have top-notch programs for teens but a facility that isn’t large enough or accessible to a youth audience. You may see mutual benefit in sharing marketing or staff. Your staff may want to tap into the special expertise that a youth services organization or agency could offer. Or you may simply want to partner with another community arts education organization so that both can expand their reach and offer opportunities neither could offer alone.
- ➔ **DEVELOP YOUR PARTNERING SKILLS.** If you’re new to collaborative ventures, invest time in learning how they work. Commit to in-house dialogue about partnership planning and logistics, delve into the extensive literature on nonprofit partnerships, or consult informally with colleagues who have had successful experiences.

RESOURCES

Partners in Excellence, National Guild, www.nationalguild.org/programs/partners_publication.htm

The Workshop Out of School, Performing Arts Workshop, www.performingartsworkshop.org



PHOTO: ROCKY MOUNTAIN CENTER FOR MUSICAL ARTS, LAFAYETTE, CO

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

CREATE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

Teens want to belong. They need to know they are welcome, and they appreciate feeling like active members of your organization's internal community, not just visitors to your building. Effective programs for adolescents happen in environments where teens feel not just welcome but safe and comfortable. Both physical and psychological safety are important. Having a dedicated area for teens to gather, socialize, work, and learn is just one part of creating a positive environment. Another is providing an atmosphere that promotes community and encourages self-expression, program content that stimulates artistic and personal growth, and a program structure that balances work and learning with

relaxation and downtime with peers. The point is to infuse the program with the message, "We trust you. We like you. We care, you are important, and we want others to know about you."

Ideally, the geography of the facility as a whole, and the location of youth-oriented spaces within it, provide a sense of security and confidence about

participating. If you can, set aside a room or studio solely dedicated to the teen program where teens find the furnishings, lighting, equipment, and materials they need to make or perform art. If space does not permit this, find other ways for them to convene and connect outside the classroom, studio, or performance space: a central bulletin board, a circle of comfortable chairs, or a Facebook page that invites participants to connect



with each other outside class and signals their belonging to the organization. Outside classes and workshops, create opportunities for teens to socialize, share their work informally, and interact with adult teachers and mentors. Make sure that all staff know about the program and help teens feel welcome and comfortable, from the person who greets them at the front desk to the organization's director.

“We trust you. We like you. We care, you are important, and we want others to know about you.”

PHOTO: CRESCENDO ACADEMY OF MUSIC, KALAMAZOO, MI. PHOTOGRAPHER: KEITH EVERETT JONES.

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

TIPS: WELCOMING ENVIRONMENTS

- ➔ **AGREE WITH TEENS ON GUIDELINES FOR WORKING TOGETHER.** It's human nature to be more comfortable in situations that have some structure, and adolescents are no exception. Involve students in the process of defining what a safe space means to them and setting clear guidelines and rules for engagement at the beginning of the program. Discuss issues such as attendance, confidentiality, language, and the process of sharing feedback on each other's work. Students and adults should agree on consequences for breaking these rules. Post the agreement on the studio wall. Give a copy to each student, and revisit it periodically if needed. Also, ask students to take responsibility for maintaining the physical space—regular tasks to keep the area neat, supplies and materials on hand, and equipment in working order.
- ➔ **DECIDE HOW COMMUNICATION WILL HAPPEN.** Design interactions around teens' communication preferences. Text messaging is the most prevalent form of exchanging news and information among teens. Online spaces also build a sense of belonging: a website, Facebook pages, a Flickr photostream, and

other options students choose and create. Ask teens to work with you to decide how to share information outside program hours. Every group will have different preferences, from Twitter to texting. Teens should also work with their adult teachers and mentors to decide how to share their creative product and whom they want to share it with.

- ➔ **DESIGN COMFORTABLE SPACES.** A lounge area for socializing, a meeting table for planning and discussion, and a closet or lockers to store personal belongings contribute to a physical space that promotes responsibility and respects teens' needs and habits—and that looks and feels different from the classrooms where they spend their days. Student artwork, photographs of past performances, and bulletin boards with information about local arts and arts education opportunities should fill the walls.

RESOURCE

Maryellen Coffey, Kambiz Maali, Mav Pardee, and Bronia Clifton, *Developing Spaces by and for Teens in Out-of-School-Time Programs*, Build the Out-of-School Time Network and Children's Investment Fund, www.bostnet.org.

DEVELOP THE RIGHT MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Organizations that run successful programs for adolescents stress peer-to-peer recruitment as the central strategy. Teens depend on what they hear and who tells them, and they assign relative value to experiences based on what they learn by word of mouth. They are attracted to programs and activities that their peers perceive as social, creative, and educational, so that is the image you should project. The relationships fostered through the program ultimately support retention and enthusiastic participation.

“Organizations that run successful programs for adolescents stress peer-to-peer recruitment as the central strategy.”

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

For all these reasons, a youth advisory group is an ideal partner in marketing and recruitment. They're enthusiastic about your teen programs, knowledgeable about the teen market, and in touch with their peer group. Involve them from the start in developing a marketing plan. When building the group's membership, aim for a cross-section of teens from different neighborhoods and schools. Listen and learn from their ideas about what works and what doesn't. Give them specific tasks, such as reviewing, writing, and designing marketing materials, building a marketing list from their high schools, making personal contacts, and tweeting about their experience in your teen programs.

TIPS: MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT

➔ **STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD.** Young people are bombarded with commercial messages. Their challenge is how to decide on priorities for allocating their time. To attract young audiences, arts education programming needs to resonate within their environment, using an authentic, youth-centered voice. Recalibrate marketing messages so that you speak their language.



- ➔ **PROVIDE EASY INTERACTIVITY.** Offer drop-in experiences, sampler programs, or open houses that let teens discover firsthand what they'll gain and learn. Immerse them in hands-on art making and interaction with peers. Introduce them to adult teachers and mentors who work with teens. Provide an immediate way for teens to sign up or recruit peers after they are introduced to what your organization has to offer.
- ➔ **RECRUIT PAIRS AND GROUPS OF FRIENDS.** Starting with advisory council members, encourage youth to invite their friends into your programs. Hold a monthly "bring a friend" event that blends creative activity with socializing.

➔ **USE MULTIPLE MARKETING MEDIA.** Teens respond to the immediacy of social media, especially when tweets and Facebook updates come from their peers. Upload performance or artwork videos to your organization's YouTube channel and promote them to generate interest. Print communications can reinforce these messages for teens and often are the main way adults learn about the programs you offer for youth. Schools, community groups, churches, and other organizations will distribute print marketing materials.

RESOURCES

Arts for All: Connecting to New Audiences, Wallace Foundation, www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/ArtsParticipation/Pages/arts-for-all.aspx.

Ashleigh Collins et al., "Using Incentives to Increase Participation in Out-of-School Time Programs," *Child Trends Research-to-Results Brief*, www.childtrends.org/files//child_trends-2008_06_18_pi_ostincentives.pdf.

Getting Started with Market Research for Out-of-School Time Planning, Wallace Foundation, www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/Out-Of-SchoolLearning/Pages/getting-started-market-research.aspx.

PHOTO: ARTSPREP PROGRAM AT CUYAHOGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE, CLEVELAND, OH

FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

EVALUATE TO INVIGORATE TEEN PROGRAMS AND PROMOTE RETENTION

Beginning in middle school and continuing through high school, it becomes more and more difficult to keep teens interested and involved in out-of-school activities. Teens may lose interest because of competing out-of-school activities, increased academic demands, or work responsibilities. And if teen participation is visibly sparse, it's even harder to attract new students from this age group to your organization.

An organization that focuses on sequential learning designed to deepen and increase knowledge over time has a built-in way to encourage students to return. Otherwise, students may feel that they have outgrown the program, having progressed as far as they can or tried all the program options.

Evaluation is essential to keep teen programs relevant and effective and retain students. Consistent feedback from program participants lets you know what works, what needs improvement, and what should be eliminated. Make it easy and comfortable for teens to provide this feedback without fear of judgment or any negative reaction.

A logic model approach to program design integrates evaluation and links programs to specific arts learning and youth development outcomes. Equipped with ongoing feedback from evaluation, you can refine and design appealing and appropriate programming that keeps them engaged and coming back year after year.

TIPS: EVALUATION AND RETENTION

- ➔ **PROVIDE LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES.** Teens look for opportunities to build their leadership and teamwork skills. They tend to thrive on group interaction and shared responsibility. Invite teens to provide formal and informal feedback, and use their insights to keep programming relevant.
- ➔ **INVOLVE ALUMNI.** Young adults who have benefited from your teen programs can be good spokespersons and mentors to current students.
- ➔ **PARTNER WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS** in creative strategies for keeping youth interested. Youth services agencies have the expertise to know why teens become disengaged from out-of-school activities and what you can do to keep them interested.



- ➔ **INVOLVE PARENTS AND FAMILIES.** Organizations have better luck keeping teens engaged when their parents and guardians are involved and supportive.

RESOURCES

Boston Youth Arts Evaluation Project Resources, www.byaep.com/1/Resources_Links.html.

Evaluation Toolkit, National Alliance for Media Art and Culture, www.namac.org/evaluation-toolkit.

"Evaluation," National Guild Community Arts Education Resource Center. resourcecenter.nationalguild.org/Topics/Evaluation.aspx (National Guild members only).

"Evaluation," *YouthArts Toolkit*, Americans for the Arts. www.americansforthearts.org/youtharts/evaluation/.

Measuring Youth Program Quality: A Guide to Assessment Tools, The Forum for Youth Investment, forumfyi.org/node/297.

PHOTO: METRO PARKS AND RECREATION, CULTURAL ARTS DIVISION, NASHVILLE, TN

CONCLUSION

When they integrate youth development practices, community arts education providers can develop teens' artistic skills, self-confidence, sense of belonging, and potential. The stories of the eight organizations profiled in this guide—a diverse group in terms of size, artistic discipline, and mission—confirm that this holistic approach can work in multiple settings.

Whether you are taking the first step or building on an existing program, we invite you to consider teens' developmental needs; focus on their assets, interests, energy, and potential; and give them a leadership role in program design, marketing, and implementation.

When encouraged and supported by adult mentors, teens eagerly take positive risks, ask challenging questions, and share edgy ideas in ways that not only spur their development but can benefit your organization and community. Their energy is contagious.



“Mosaic taught me how to really work hard at getting something I want. Knowing that you belong and knowing that people care forces you to want to do the best that you possibly can.”

MOSAIC YOUTH THEATRE YOUNG ARTIST

PHOTO: CANADA'S NATIONAL BALLET SCHOOL, TORONTO, ON

NOTES

1 Philip Yenawine, "The Needs of Youth," in *Fuel: Giving Youth the Power to Succeed* (Chicago: Marwen, 2004), p. 6. www.marwen.org.

2 Stephani Etheridge Woodson, "Models for Working with Youth in Community Arts," Community Arts Network, www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2008/09/models_for_work.php.

3 Based on a definition of youth development in Dale A. Blyth and Lynne M. Borden, *Stimulating Research, Promoting Youth Development: Final Report of the National Youth Development Research Response Initiative* (University of Minnesota Center for 4-H Youth Development, 2003).

4 Woodson, "Models for Working with Youth in Community Arts."

5 Shirley Brice Heath, with Adelma M. Roach, "Imaginative Actuality: Learning in the Arts during the Nonschool Hours," in *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*, ed. Edward B. Fiske (Arts Education Partnership and President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 1999), p. 22. www.aep-arts.org/files/publications/ChampsReport.pdf.

6 Surdna Foundation, foreword to *Powerful Voices: Developing High-Impact Arts Programs for Teens* (Surdna, 2002), n.p. www.surdna.org/images/stories/content_img/docs/powerfulvoices-eng.pdf.

7 Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit, Lorraine M. Gutiérrez, and Michael S. Spencer, *Excellence on Stage and in Life: The Mosaic Model for Youth Development through the Arts* (Mosaic, 2008). www.mosaicedetroit.org/about-model.htm.

8 For more about the work of BYAEP, go to www.byaep.com.

9 Walker Art Center, *A Teen Programs How-To Kit*, p. 2. media.walkerart.org/pdf/wac_teen_kit_booklet.pdf.

10 Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, *Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for a New Century* (Washington, DC: 1995), n.p.

11 Kaiser Family Foundation, *Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds* (January 2010), www.kff.org/entmedia/8010.cfm; Amanda Lenhart, Rich Ling, Scott Campbell, and Kristin Purcell, *Teens and Mobile Phones* (Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2010), www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Teens-and-Mobile-Phones.aspx.

12 Yenawine, "The Needs of Youth," p. 13.

“Sitar Arts Center is like a second home to me. It has provided me with countless opportunities and experiences and has allowed me to connect and share my talent with other teens in my community. It has also been a positive alternative for me in my neighborhood. Without this place, I can’t imagine what my life would be like.”

DEONTE, AGE 17

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supports and advances access to lifelong learning opportunities in the arts. Members include community schools of the arts; arts centers; and arts education divisions of performing arts institutions, universities, museums, and other organizations. In concert with this dynamic network, the Guild researches and promotes best practices, provides opportunities for professional development and dialogue, advocates for broad access, and makes grants to the field.