



Creative Youth Development Toolkit

Landscape Analysis

Trends in CYD Programs

by Denise Montgomery

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About this Paper

Americans for the Arts is proud to be one of the leaders of the **Creative Youth Development National Partnership**, which is working to advance the field of creative youth development (CYD), the intentional integration of arts learning and youth development principles. As part of this collective initiative, Americans for the Arts commissioned field experts to produce a set of seven landscape analyses about key topics within youth development. These papers identify trends in creative youth development, share recommendations for CYD practitioners, and suggest areas for future exploration. The areas of focus of these papers are:

- 1) Trends in CYD Programs
- 2) Advocacy and Policy
- 3) Working in Social Justice
- 4) Program Evaluation
- 5) Preparing Artists & Educators
- 6) Working with Youth
- 7) Funding, Sustainability, and Partnerships

These landscape analyses are one part of a larger project led by Americans for the Arts to create a new, first-of-its-kind **Creative Youth Development Toolkit** that will aggregate the most effective tools and resources from exemplary creative youth development programs throughout the country. The CYD Toolkit will build upon the success and longevity of the Youth Arts Toolkit (2003), a landmark study of arts programs serving at-risk youth that can be found at <http://youtharts.artsusa.org/>.

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INTRODUCTION

Creative Youth Development (CYD) programs, with their grassroots and community-based origins, are a heterogeneous field of practice that has, in recent years, codified characteristics of high quality CYD through a series of frameworks. Primary examples include the frameworks featured in the *Boston Youth Arts Handbook and Workbook*, Massachusetts Cultural Council's *Seen & Heard* CYD blog, *The Mosaic Model for Youth Development Through the Arts*, and *Something to Say: Success Principles for Afterschool Arts Programs From Urban Youth and Other Experts*. These frameworks support shared understanding of the work and can be tools to help programs strengthen practice and advance along a spectrum of quality, thereby increasing engagement and supporting more positive outcomes for youth.

At the same time, CYD practitioners are committed to reflection and ongoing refinement, to programs being actively shaped by young people, and being connected to and a reflection of their communities. Therefore, CYD program practices are continuously in development.

Drawing on the youth development literature, literature specific to creative youth development, and exchanges with CYD practitioners, in this landscape analysis I discuss five current trends in CYD program development. These five trends include: Holistic Approaches Growing as Needs Grow, Collaboration Across Sectors, New Generation of Program Staff with New Approaches, Scaling by Depth, and Establishing Creative Career Pathways. This is preceded by an overview of the historical foundation of CYD program development and summary of underpinning research. Following discussion of the trends, I make recommendations for further exploration.

HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

In the United States, tuition-free, community-based youth arts programs trace some of their origins to the settlement house movement of the 1890s and early 1900s (Starr, ed. by Deegan and Wahl, 2003; Montgomery, 2016). Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr established Hull-House, the influential first settlement house in the U.S., in Chicago in 1889, as a community center to provide programming and services to immigrants. The U.S.'s first community school of the arts, created by Addams and Starr in 1892, bore hallmarks of CYD, including engaging young people in program design, connecting with and expressing cultural identity through the arts, encouragement of original self-expression, and performances and exhibitions (Adams, 1912; Starr, ed. by Deegan and Wahl, 2003; Montgomery, 2016). By 1914 nearly all of the 400 settlement houses in the U.S. offered arts programs for youth as well as adults (Rabkin et al, 2011).

The philosophies of early progressive educator John Dewey contributed to the theoretical underpinnings of creative youth development, including Dewey's recognition of the transformative power of the arts, that experience shapes learning, and the ability of the arts to raise consciousness around social and political issues. (Clements, 2013; Dewey, 1934). Dewey was revolutionary in his espousal of experiential learning, as compared to passive learning acquired through lecture and memorization of facts.

Roots of CYD also sprang from inside people's living rooms and churches and community centers by way of people of color sharing their artistic and cultural heritage with youth in their communities. Often informal in nature, these practices are an essential link in the helix of creative youth development's DNA.

Another key period in the evolution of the field of creative youth development was the late 1980s and 1990s when the U.S. experienced a wave of new programs started primarily by artists (Montgomery, 2016). These program founders, committed to social justice, frequently cite *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by progressive educator and activist Paulo Freire as influential to their work. This seminal work continues to influence CYD today.

In 1996, *Coming Up Taller: Arts and Humanities for Children and Youth At Risk* (Weitz, 1996) raised awareness of CYD and made the case for arts- and humanities-based youth development programs. Then, in 1998, Americans for the Arts, in partnership with U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, illustrated how CYD can partner with education, juvenile justice, and social services toward shared goals in the *YouthArts Handbook: Arts Programs for Youth at Risk*, a forerunner to CYD's growing collaboration across allied youth sectors (Farnum and Schaffer, 1998).¹

In the 1990s, the Search Institute pioneered its Developmental Assets for Youth work, which catalogues the internal and external assets that young people need to optimally develop. This evidence-based framework has been a driving force in youth development program design. It also helped to make youth development as important a lens as prevention and intervention by providing language and clarity around assets-based youth development (Blyth, 2011).

CYD practitioners embraced youth development's shift away from a deficit orientation with regard to young people and toward an assets-based approach that recognizes that all young people have strengths. Rather than focusing on risk factors and on what young people are perceived as lacking—effectively considering youth as problems to be fixed—an assets-based view of youth honors and builds from young people's unique assets.

Karen Pittman of the Forum for Youth Investment drew attention to the need to move beyond problem reduction to development of the skills, knowledge, behaviors, and motivation necessary for young people to thrive. Pittman created the catchphrase "Problem-free isn't fully prepared," and later expanded it to include "And fully prepared isn't fully engaged." (Pittman, 1999).

In the late 1990s, Shirley Brice Heath shared her insights from a decade of field research on out-of-school time (OST) programs, revealing that young people participating in arts-based

¹ The term "at risk" used in the subtitle of *YouthArts Handbook: Arts Programs for Youth at Risk*, reflects the language in use at the time. The field of CYD has embraced an assets-based approach. Today, the term at risk is not typically used in the field of creative youth development.

programs experienced greater cognitive and linguistic development as compared to youth participating in other types of programs such as athletics. Heath's findings galvanized CYD practitioners. Key publications include "Living the Arts Through Language-Learning: A Report on Community-Based Youth Organizations" (Heath, Soep, and Roach 1998) and "Imaginative Actuality: Learning in the Arts in the Nonschool Hours" in *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning* (Heath and Roach 1999).

The publication of *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* in 2002 was a milestone in the research literature on youth programs in the United States. Also known as the "Blue Book," it examined program design, implementation, and evaluation in community-based programs for youth. Editors Eccles and Gootman noted the emergence of a holistic view of youth development and growing awareness of how young people need a range of personal and social assets as well as life skills and knowledge in order to realize their potential (Eccles and Gootman, 2002).

"Collective Impact," John Kania and Mark Kramer's groundbreaking 2011 article in *Stanford Social Innovation Review* highlights broad cross-sector collaboration in efforts to affect large-scale social change. The piece continues to influence the social sector, including CYD, and has been a catalyst for collective impact initiatives throughout the U.S. *Setting the Agenda* (Stevenson, 2014), the precursor to the National Summit on Creative Youth Development in 2014, cites "Building Collective Impact to Improve Youth Outcomes" as the first of five strategic priorities for the CYD field.

CYD publications based on direct research with youth remain scant in the field of CYD, a disconnect with CYD's core value of youth voice. *Something to Say: Success Principles for Afterschool Arts Programs from Urban Youth and Other Experts* (Montgomery, Rogovin, and Persaud 2013) provides insights on tween participation and engagement in out-of-school time arts programs through direct research with tweens and teens on motivations and barriers with regard to out-of-school time program participation.

Three recent publications examine CYD and arts programming in settings outside of dedicated CYD program spaces: *Room to Rise: The Lasting Impact of Intensive Teen Programs in Art Museums*, published by the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2016; *Partnering With Community Arts Organizations: A Pathway to a High-Quality Club Experience*, published by Boys & Girls Clubs of America in 2017; and Research for Action's 2018 report *Designing for Engagement: The Experiences of Tweens in the Boys & Girls Clubs' Youth Arts Initiative*.

The Forum for Youth Investment continues to provide leadership on what they call readiness, including with the publication in 2016 of *Ready by Design: The Science (and Art) of Youth Readiness*.

Youth Development Principles and Practices in Out-of-School Time Settings (Witt and Caldwell, Eds., 2018), is a new youth development textbook intended for use by youth development students and practitioners. The book includes chapters on CYD, Intentional Programming Using Logic Models, and The Role of Culture in Out-of-School Time Settings, among other topics.

Finally, the *National Action Blueprint: Youth. Creativity. Now. Building Opportunities and Support for Creative Youth Development* (Montgomery, 2018) maps strategies and actions for advancing CYD that include implications for program development.

The field of CYD has evolved alongside the field of youth development, growing in sophistication and nuance of practice. CYD programs and stakeholders have an array of publications and tools on which to draw to learn about CYD, deepen practice, and improve program quality. Meanwhile the field of CYD is dynamic and practitioners continue to pose questions and to test approaches to refine programs.

KEY TRENDS

CYD programs, resolved to support young people to thrive, are actively working to find ways to support youth in navigating not only ordinary stages of development and identity formation, but also school violence, individual and community trauma, and poverty. At the same time, CYD programs are striving to help young people develop the life skills, knowledge, and necessary supports to realize their potential and to successfully transition into adulthood.

TREND #1: HOLISTIC APPROACHES EVOLVING AS NEEDS GROW

Creative youth development programs are holistic in nature and are concerned with the entirety of a young person's life; including their emotional and social well-being, mental health, safety, and basic life needs for food, shelter, and clothing. Beyond the widespread recognition that healing can occur through artmaking and creative expression, holistic program practices and approaches to providing support services vary across CYD programs. Some programs use restorative circles, others employ mindfulness techniques, and others such as RiverzEdge Arts in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, have systems by which young people can readily access one-on-one support from program staff.

CYD program staff seek to fulfill young people's need "to connect with students in a safe and positive way to reflect on news, community issues, personal and growing up issues that can inform the artistic responses in young people...a space to feel safe, talk, and listen without judgement or having to 'ask' for it."²

The current social and political turbulence in the United States is resulting in unprecedented levels of young people turning to CYD program staff to provide types of support that may fall outside of artistic staff members' expertise. To address these needs effectively and responsibly, many programs have built relationships with social service providers in their communities and actively refer students. Other programs have embedded social workers on staff. Still others, such as Mosaic Youth Theater of Detroit, assign an artistic staff lead and a social services staff lead for every production, proactively embedding professional support within young people's experience at Mosaic.

² DiFiglia, Jennifer. Personal correspondence. May 29, 2018. DiFiglia is Chief Program Officer at LEAP New York City and holds a master's degree in social work.

Trauma informed practice is an element of many CYD programs. In the wake of growing implementation of this practice Shawn Ginwright, author of *Hope and Healing in Urban Education*, has published *The Future of Healing: Shifting from Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement* (Ginwright, 2018). In this blog post Ginwright puts forth healing centered engagement as a practice that is asset-based and centers culture as a central feature of well-being.

As CYD practitioners consider how to optimize their holistic approaches, there is some concern within organizations about keeping creativity at the center of the work and about not becoming too clinical. Additionally, and as Ginwright reminds us, those engaged in supporting healing for youth must heal themselves and must routinely restore themselves. These practices and acts of self-care are typically not viewed as part of CYD program design, yet they are inherent to program delivery.

TREND #2: COLLABORATION ACROSS SECTORS

The *National Action Blueprint: Youth. Creativity. Now. Building Opportunities and Support for Creative Youth Development* states:

As allied youth fields such as juvenile justice, health and wellness, and workforce development increasingly take a youth development approach, leaders in these sectors and movements are building awareness and recognition of the ways in which CYD aligns with and supports mutual goals. CYD programs and organizations are forming cross-sector partnerships and alliances as strategies to connect with more young people, build engagement, and diversify and grow funding.

The Blueprint calls for the CYD field to work across allied youth sectors not only at the local and regional level, but also at the national level. The Blueprint presents a matrix of areas of alignment across sectors based on research it commissioned from The Forum for Youth Investment (Montgomery, 2018).

While individual CYD organizations have worked cross sector since the field's beginnings, for the CYD field as a whole, cross-sector collaboration remains a way of working that is relatively early stage. The number of success stories is growing as numerous CYD programs are engaged in collaborations with adjacent sectors.

In Massachusetts, through program partnerships and collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, more funding for CYD is coming from the state's corrections budget than from the state arts council's budget. In Los Angeles, the Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network garnered \$2 million in funds from the L.A. County corrections budget in a single budget cycle. Fourteen CYD partner organizations are now working with detained and court-involved youth.

TREND #3: NEW GENERATION OF PROGRAM STAFF & LEADERSHIP WITH NEW APPROACHES

A new generation of CYD leaders and program staff, many of whom are alumni of CYD programs such as Destiny Arts Project in Oakland, California; SAY SÍ in San Antonio, and Youth Speaks in San Francisco, among many others, are working in new ways and outside of traditional nonprofit

structures to forge opportunities to advance their CYD missions and associated social justice work and civic engagement across sectors.

These skilled and adept 21st century leaders are often people of color, which is important given that the majority of youth with whom programs are engaged are young people of color.

This new generation is bringing fresh approaches to the work of CYD and is rejecting current structures in nonprofit administration and leadership. Young creatives working in CYD are entrepreneurial, digital natives, and adept at leveraging digital platforms and combining them with on-the-ground experiences to generate excitement, participation, support, and adoption of a new flavor of CYD, one that is relevant and moving. Unwilling to perpetuate the status quo of exhausting pursuit of funding that is largely inaccessible to community-based organizations, new CYD leaders are taking steps to function independent of philanthropy. These leaders are the vanguard in CYD and the field stands to benefit from their disruptive innovation at both the program and organizational levels.

TREND #4: SCALING BY DEPTH

Recognizing that deep levels of engagement are conducive and necessary to build trusting relationships and for high level skill building, CYD practitioners and organizations are choosing to invest substantial time and resources in individual young people.

However, with many young people lacking equitable access to high quality CYD programs, some tension remains between quality CYD practice and a desire to serve more young people. Efforts to “scale up” to significantly increase the number of youth and geographic range being served by a CYD program have, to date, been limited, largely because of concerns about program fidelity, lack of capital, and a keen understanding that authentic connection to local community is an important aspect of strong CYD program practices. Therefore, many CYD programs elect to go deeper with the young people involved in their programs and are actively exploring program practices in support of that approach.

While funders are growing in their awareness and understanding of CYD, public and private funders alike continue to press for increases in numbers of youth served and lower costs per young person to accommodate these greater numbers. CYD grant applicants can be penalized in competitive grants scoring processes and receive diminished grant awards for choosing to scale by depth.

TREND #5: CREATIVE CAREER PATHWAYS

CYD programs are increasingly working to establish organized supports and networks for CYD program participants to be prepared for, gain experience in, and pursue jobs and careers in the creative industries, from film and television to fashion design and video game design. Strategies include paid apprenticeships, creative career internship programs, opportunities to interact with creative career professionals, scholarships, hiring staff who are practicing professionals in creative industries, and creating an alternative high school designed to facilitate young people in pursuing creative industry careers.

CYD organizations’ creative career efforts include program practices to support college and career readiness. Alongside their development of technical skills, youth program participants are also

gaining a range of knowledge and skills to help them do well academically and socially in college or training programs and be successful in their future careers.

ArtworxLA, a Los Angeles-based CYD organization, is working with education, workforce development, and creative industry in Los Angeles toward shared goals and with a particular emphasis on creative career pathways. Exemplifying cross-sector partnership that leads to diversified and expanded funding in addition to increased positive outcomes for youth, artworxLA was awarded a multi-year \$550,000 grant for its creative careers pathways work by the U.S. Department of Labor.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FIELD OF CYD

The exploration and discussion of key trends has identified a number of recommendations for CYD to support and accelerate innovations in CYD program development.

Among the most salient actions identified in the *National Action Blueprint: Youth. Creativity. Now. Building Opportunities and Support for Creative Youth Development* with regard to program development is “Support, catalyze, and connect local, state, and regional peer learning networks,” calling such networks “an effective way for practitioners and other CYD stakeholders to support and learn from each other” (Montgomery, 2018).

To support deep program engagement and relationship building among CYD youth program participants and practitioners, CYD stakeholders must take steps to build awareness of the value of this approach and of scaling by depth. CYD champions and funder allies should address how blunt grant application and panel scoring measures of cost per youth and number of youth served can thwart effective program practices.

CYD stakeholders should seek to strategically participate in or initiate collective impact initiatives to benefit youth and communities.

CYD practitioners and stakeholders, including youth, should convene to collaborate in merging the various frameworks of CYD program practice for greater clarity for practitioners.

The CYD field must champion the innovations of the new generation of CYD program staff and leaders as they break new ground.

Knowledge gaps should be addressed with the active input of practitioners and youth. CYD practice is nuanced in ways that people working with young people every day are best able to illuminate. Additionally, increases in youth perspectives in the CYD program development research will strengthen research insights and increase the usefulness and efficacy of recommendations. Youth influencing and shaping programs is an important embodiment of CYD values. While youth are initiating programs and program changes and sharing decisions with adults in exemplary CYD programs across the United States, the CYD field needs to prioritize youth involvement in dialogue about program development beyond individual organizations and extending to regional and national level dialogue and deliberations. A step forward in national youth leadership involvement in CYD is the National Guild for Community Arts Education’s 2018 pilot Emerging Young Artists’ Leadership Exchange.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

- Explore ways to effectively and responsibly support young people with holistic program practices and with support services while maintaining a focus on creative practice. Identify and share program practices that remove barriers and stigma from young people seeking support.
- Build and amplify methods for CYD program staff to heal and renew themselves in order to make possible their ongoing work with youth and to care for themselves.
- Identify and share emerging approaches to cross-sector collaboration that include candid discussion of the challenges of partnering across sectors and strategies for addressing these challenges.
- Invest in experimental approaches to working cross-sector to explore new approaches that could lead to effective collaboration.
- Explore and gain insight into the potential and pathways to reach more young people with high-quality CYD programs through partnerships with youth development organizations and organizations/entities such as libraries and museums.
- Refine and share best practices for transitioning youth and program alumni into leadership and staff roles.
- Examine the conditions that make local peer learning networks effective forums for professional development.
- Explore how to intentionally build creative career pathways into CYD program models.

CONCLUSION

Creative youth development programs are dynamic and are by nature are in a perpetual state of program development. In order to best support CYD program development, the field must build professional development capacity and multiple pathways for CYD practitioners and stakeholders to engage with and learn from one another in order to evolve and strengthen CYD program practice. Further, and significantly, young people should be actively engaged in dialogue and deliberation about practice occurring at all levels in the field and in research on CYD program practice.

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