



Designing for Engagement: The Benefits of High-Quality Arts Programming for Tweens National Guild for Community Arts Education, Wallace Foundation, Research for Action Webinar Q&A

Panelists:

Peter Rogovin, The Wallace Foundation

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Outreach & Student Retention

When did the recruitment process start? At the beginning of the school year, or during the prior year?

At the start of the pilot, each YAI session was 6 weeks long with a "try it" week at the beginning of the session. Recruitment was ongoing. Not just at the start of the school year.

Was social media used during recruitment? If so, was it useful?

Most youth did not hear about YAI first on social media. We felt we had the kids there already, if someone from outside the club were to join, it would be through someone at the club that knew them: kid, staff, or instructors. We did not study social media specifically, but Clubs did use it mostly for making YAI visible to the community--parents and partners. Most Clubs are not known as arts organizations, but social media helped them showcase the art work coming out of YAI.

It seems like the success of the YAI programs were dependent on the partnership with Boys & Girls Clubs that have a large base of tweens already involved. Starting a program at an arts organization that does not already have a lot of tweens involved would be less likely to succeed. Does this sound correct? (Perhaps there would be a need to partner with another non-arts organization that serves tweens)

No, I believe that a program may be very successful, depending on what you perceive as success: quantity, quality and or efficiency. And may even have a higher level of art because they would be solely there for that art form.

Is YAI explained to parents? Are they aware of the 10 principles and does it help with enrollment and retention? Do the students know about this approach as well? Or are they just presented as arts programs?

TA's do explain YAI to parents: both formally (big meeting and flyers) and informally (catching the parent in the parking lot or when they come in to pick up their child). I do not know if they really go over the 10 principles, but they do focus on the type of art and the commitment that is required and the culminating events. However, many parents we talked to said that they did not really "get it" until they saw a culminating event. They said that these events (or final products) really helped them see how YAI was different from other Club programs and that it was designed to result in high quality art work.

Could you elaborate on how tweens are involved in designing the space?

We brought our tween focus group in with our designer and let them have some say in room layout, colors, carpeting, type of furniture, etc.

TEACHING ARTISTS & STAFF

Did the clubs find a need to hire or increase capacity for program management for YAI or was current club staff sufficient?

Good question! Each Club has a liaison that was new close to FT position for YAI. But YAI's pilot required a lot of interaction with BGCA, Wallace, and the RFA/MAI team. Not sure that position would have to be as time intensive without the "pilot" requirements.

We have a part time staff who is not a teaching artist. She's a fantastic staff, but doesn't have all of the same skills as a teaching artist. How has this program been implemented with a staff member in her situation?

One of the success principles ask that the program be run by qualified, experts so we really haven't experienced that. However, my suggestion would be to invest in some professional development and try to bring that person's skill set up.

Were the teaching artists paid? And how were they recruited?

Teaching Artists were paid at a level that recognized their expertise. This meant that they were paid more than some other Club staff. This was a point of tension at first, but as staff came to see the advanced art skills that the teaching artists brought to the Club and youth, the tension eased. Clubs linked into national and local art networks to identify teaching artists and they looked for artists that were professional practicing artists, but also had youth development skills. Youth had input into the hiring of teaching artists. See our Raising the Barre report for more information.

In what ways do you educate you teaching artists so that they "buy in" to the program and engage in promoting student engagement?

The teaching artists were already bought in and passionate for the art form it was more of educating them on the importance of the research aspect, integrating into the Club culture. Many times, the teaching artists are independent people and not used to working in a group setting. So, the word was really "integration" of both Club to YAI and the Artist to Club.

Are the artists alone in the classroom?

In most cases it was just the artist, especially in beginning. When they had older youth, who could function as a teacher's assistant, that both provided leverage to the teaching artist, and a leadership opportunity for a youth. More recently we are using arts assistants - not quite at the same level in their career as a teaching artist but with enough knowledge to lead youth under direction of the artist.

Was is completely up to the teaching artists to define their curriculum and methods of teaching or did the boys and girls club dictate anything?

No, it was completely up to the teaching artist. The 10 principles were the guiding framework and there were parameters around amount of program time, skill-development and open studio etc. But the teaching artist designed the program.

Did you find that Club staff felt like YAI was "their" program or a program that someone else offered at their site? Do you think staff feelings about program ownership are important to this program's success?

We address this in the Raising the Barre report. How the Club staff perceived YAI at the start of the initiative varied by Club. In some Clubs YAI was not completely integrated early on in the initiative. But over time it did become integrated at all Clubs. Integration of YAI into the Club was important for its success

LOGISTICS

Transportation is always a huge barrier for our outreach programs, what scheduling tactics were used in order to help avoid the transportation issues?

Here in Green Bay we really looked to plug into the regular Club rotation schedule and when members arrive. One site has a couple buses that arrive pretty early, 2:45-2:50, so we run a session for that group until 3:30 snack and then run a session for members that arrive a little later after so a group A and group B. We also used after dinner when members are being picked up as an Open Studio because a Skill Development session would have too many interruptions.

Did the day of the week/time of the day affect the success of the programs?

No real day or time. Really depends on when members arrive, get picked up, snack, dinner and we've played around with dosage, twice a week for 2 hours each day, Mon-Thur for an hour. What we did see success in was keeping Fridays as an Open Studio day for kids to make up, use as end of week incentives, arts exposure field trips.

How often were exposure classes offered?

They were asked to offer them once a week, but some teaching artists offered them more frequently.

RESULTS AND DATA

Did you utilize any kind of assessments for the students to measure their increase in artistic skill and/or social/emotional growth?

Our research did not assess social and emotional growth in this first phase. We are planning to do assess growth in the next round of research. The research on program benefits at this stage was exploratory and relied on qualitative data. We heard about social and emotional development from parents, Club staff and youth in focus groups and interviews.

We'd love to see the family and student survey questions! Were participants/stakeholder surveyed after each term?

Participants were surveyed each term. We talked to parents in multiple focus groups over the two years of the project. One of the surveys we used was the Youth Experiences Survey developed by Dr. David Hansen.

Did this program only track boys and girls? is there any data for gender non-conforming students?

We do not have that data, but it's a good question.