


The Power of Combining  
**Y**outh  
Development  
Principles,  
Culture And Arts

FINDINGS OF A STUDY OF THE  
CULTURE & ARTS YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE  
2003-2007  
THE SKILLMAN FOUNDATION



Center for Youth and Communities  
The Heller School for Social Policy and Management  
Brandeis University



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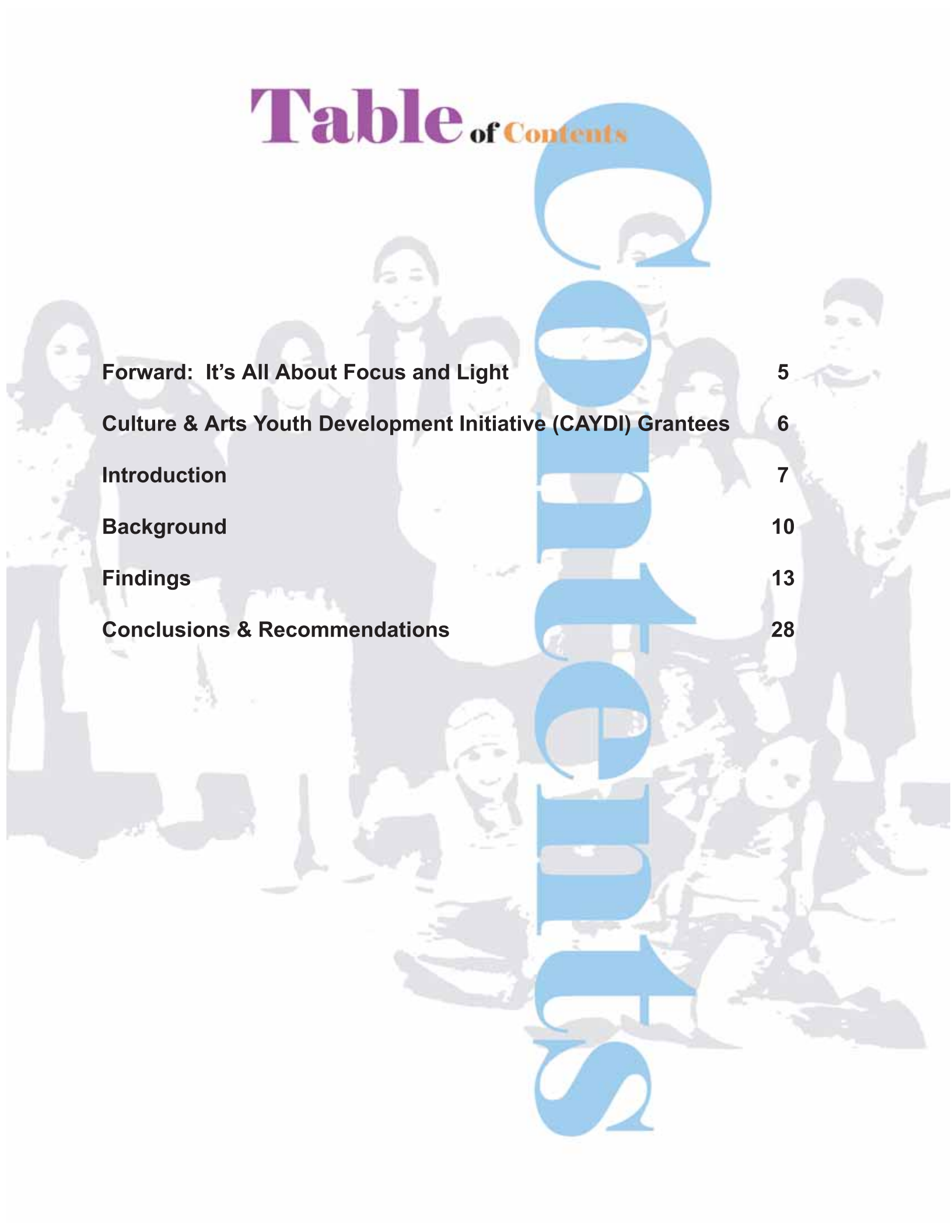
***This monograph may be found as a PDF download at [www.skillman.org](http://www.skillman.org).***



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REPORTS





## It's all about **focus** and **light**



Darnell Gardner, Student, Focus: HOPE, Focus on the Mission Excel

Imagine attending a professional photographer's gallery opening. Stunning black-and-white photographs grace the gallery walls. Guests mingle and comment to each other about the quality of the artwork—the fall of the light here, the emotion captured in a picture there, the interplay of light and dark, the relationship of hope and sadness.

Your eye catches one piece that shows a close-up of a geodesic structure. Something about the work speaks to you. Then you turn your head and spot yet another extraordinary photo—and another—and another.

Now imagine being a Detroit 9th grader and that you and your peers were the photographers. The gallery opening is in your honor. This is the culmination of the artistic work you created while participating in the Focus on the Mission program.

In May, Focus: HOPE, a culture and arts initiative grantee of The Skillman Foundation, sponsored the Focus on the Mission Excel Exhibit for the young people completing the program. Participants displayed the best of their black-and-white photographs, which were professionally framed, matted, and hung gallery style. Each photographer's comments accompanied the photographs. In addition to the photographers themselves, a crowd of about 200 people attended, including family members and friends, teachers, mentors, professional photographers, and community, institutional, philanthropic, and corporate leaders. Impressed guests wandered among the photo exhibits and chatted with the photographers.

The young photographers chose subjects that were special to them, connected with their lives, pertained to diversity and cooperation, showed beauty amidst difficulty, conveyed important messages, or simply struck their artistic eyes. These well-conceived and interesting photographs told stories and stimulated questions and comments. Following the exhibition at Focus: HOPE, the photos are traveling throughout the year to selected galleries in metropolitan Detroit.

# Culture & Arts Youth Development Initiative (CAYDI) Grantees

**Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)** Arab American National Museum engages Arab-American, African-American and Latino youth in Southwest Detroit in arts programming, which allows them to explore and express their culture and creativity through photography, film making and creative writing.

**Cable Communications Public Benefit Corporation, SCOOP** is an award-winning multi-media youth development program that provides youth with high-quality media arts training and internship opportunities with experienced media professionals. SCOOP has also piloted a satellite site in Southwest Detroit to serve youth in their neighborhoods.

**City of Detroit, Department of Recreation, The Culture Connection** provides low-cost transportation and access to a network of 12 of Detroit's arts and cultural institutions and special events.

**College for Creative Studies, Detroit Neighborhood Arts Workshops** program is a collaboration with Don Bosco Hall and Youth on the Edge of Greatness to provide visual arts programming and design instruction for middle school students in two neighborhoods using youth development best practices.

**Communities in Schools & Detroit Public Schools** Communities in Schools partners with the Detroit Public Schools Office of Fine Arts Education to coordinate and deliver high-quality visual arts programming to youth after school and on Saturdays as part of a comprehensive multi-disciplinary arts program in 10 neighborhood schools.

**Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Civic Philharmonic Program** recruits young people from neighborhood and Detroit Public schools to participate in the Civic Philharmonic, an intermediate level program. Philharmonic members participate in master classes with well-known artists, work regularly with symphony musicians and play three public performances annually.

**Focus: HOPE: Focus on the Mission Excel Program** partners with Detroit high schools and schools in bordering suburban communities to offer the Focus on the Mission Excel program, a community arts program emphasizing youth development and diversity through photography.

**InsideOut Literary Arts Project** works in Detroit Public Schools to offer several writer-in-residence programs, which culminate in annual student-produced publications featuring their writings and artwork, and Citywide Poets, an after-school program for high school authors.

**Matrix Theatre Company, Ladders to Success Initiative** allows young people to explore community issues through theater arts in the Teatro de la Vida, Teatro de la Juventud and Young Directors programs, which teach script development, provide performance instruction, and offer tiered levels of responsibility, leading to paid leadership positions.

**Michigan Association of Community Arts Agencies** Six CAYDI grantees receive scholarships to participate in the Community Arts Leadership Academy with nationally known professionals who deliver an intensive six-month program utilizing research and best practices to help arts leaders meet the needs of their organizations and improve the field.

**Michigan Opera Theatre, Franklin Wright Settlement's, Bridges Through Creativity Program** is a community based human service agency, supporting positive youth development in a neighborhood center using opera and dance.

**Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit** is an award-winning arts-based, youth development program that provides intensive training in acting, vocal music and technical theatre for hundreds of youth each year.

**Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts, Perform!** a performing arts program for students ages 12-17 in three Detroit recreation centers using national models, Camp Broadway and Lincoln Center's Jazz for Young People programs. It is designed to increase artistic development, teach life skills and utilize performance to improve self-esteem and achievement.

**People's Community Services of Metropolitan Detroit, Neighborhood Fine Arts and Culture Partnership** provides positive, creative activities for young people during after-school hours in two neighborhoods. The young people work with professional artists in performing arts, ceramics and visual arts to build self-esteem, team-building, communication and decision-making skills.

**The Sphinx Organization, Preparatory Music Academy** encourages the study of and participation in classical music with a particular emphasis on developing and recognizing talent in the Black and Latino communities in Detroit, and promoting youth development in the study of musical instruments and music education.

**Vanguard Community Development Corporation, Urban Artist Collective** engages underserved youth in positive arts programming; increases participants' knowledge and skills related to graphic, literary and performing arts; provides exhibition and public performance opportunities including portfolios, books and CDs; and provides adult and peer-to-peer youth development opportunities in a safe and supportive atmosphere.

**VSA Arts of Michigan, Arts JAM Program** and cognitively disabled youth and professional artists together to engage in participatory art making from conceptualization to public exhibition. Youth participate in year-round drama, video, visual arts, dance, music, creative writing and poetry programs after school. VSA works to improve these youth's access to the arts and improves their vocational and life skills and develop collaborations with other arts organizations to enhance their work with disabled youth.

**YMCA of Metropolitan Detroit, Youth Media Program** is a partnership with several community-based organizations to deliver a comprehensive media arts program utilizing state of the art technology to contribute to positive outcomes for youth and explore the relationship between art and technology.



# introduction **INMIRRO**

**"All adolescents, in all economic and social circumstances, need generous amounts of help, instruction, discipline, support and caring as they make their way from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood. Such assistance comes from many sources: solid families, good schools, supportive and safe neighborhoods, and a surrounding culture that emphasize constructive lives and respectful relationships."**

*Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*  
National Research Council, Institute of Medicine, 2002

**"It has been demonstrated that culture and arts programming is important in the healthy development of young people. The Foundation is proud of its partnership with organizations that allow youth to express their creativity, learn from professional artists, and build lasting relationships with their peers while making art."**

**Carol Goss, President & CEO  
The Skillman Foundation**

Arts and culture have fed the souls and hearts of every society throughout time. Research over the past two decades has demonstrated the power of arts and culture in the lives of young people—from attaining specific artistic proficiencies to developing critical life and work skills to improving academic performance. The integration of youth development principles with arts and culture seems a natural one—intentional focus on methods that would deeply engage young people, stimulate their best efforts, enhance their confidence, creativity, and generation of art, and provide them with knowledge, skills and experiences that would improve the quality of their lives. Indeed, as suggested in the passage above, culture and arts programs can ease the transition from childhood to adulthood. Yet, the integration is rarely deliberate in practice and rarer still in the literature.

<sup>1</sup> The Skillman Foundation engaged the Center for Youth and Communities at The Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University in July 2005 to conduct an implementation study of CAYDI. The study used methods including conducting and analyzing surveys and interviews with executive directors (12) and program staff (21) of sixteen of the seventeen CAYDI grantees; local evaluators of the CAYDI grantees (3); two focus groups with youth (18 participants); and three informal program observations involving approximately 50 young people, as well as parents and other interested adults. Additionally, Brandeis conducted a review and analysis of culture and arts research, as well as reports and other documents produced by or for The Skillman Foundation CAYDI and CAYDI grantees.



The Skillman Foundation's Culture & Arts Youth Development Initiative (CAYDI) offered insights into both and provided an opportunity to address several learning questions.

- Do culture and arts programs foster positive youth development, and if so, how?
- What key elements and best practices can be identified from research and CAYDI grantees?
- Is there added "power" for young people in the combination of youth development principles and culture and arts programs? Specifically, what outcomes are likely when the combination is well executed?

In order to answer these questions, The Skillman Foundation engaged the Center for Youth and Communities at The Heller School for Social Policy and Management of Brandeis University to conduct a cluster study in 2005-2006 of the Foundation's CAYD Initiative.<sup>1</sup> A second related study of program quality and youth participation and outcomes will be the subject of a report in late 2007. Drawing on the experience of 16 grantees,<sup>2</sup> involving more than 3,200<sup>3</sup> young people in Detroit, and the research literature, early findings from the Brandeis study suggest that the combination of youth development principles and arts and culture programs engage young people in a way that either one alone would not. If youth engagement is a predictor of positive outcomes, our study suggests this is an investment worth making.

**“It’s refreshing to see the Foundation grasping the big picture: youth development, community building, community participation, and building the leadership potential of local leaders.”**

**Michigan Association of Community Arts Agencies**

<sup>2</sup> Grantees involved in the Brandeis study were funded prior to March 2006.

<sup>3</sup> The number of youth listed does not include 15, 725 receiving transportation from the Department of Culture, Arts & Tourism and the three grantees not included in the study.

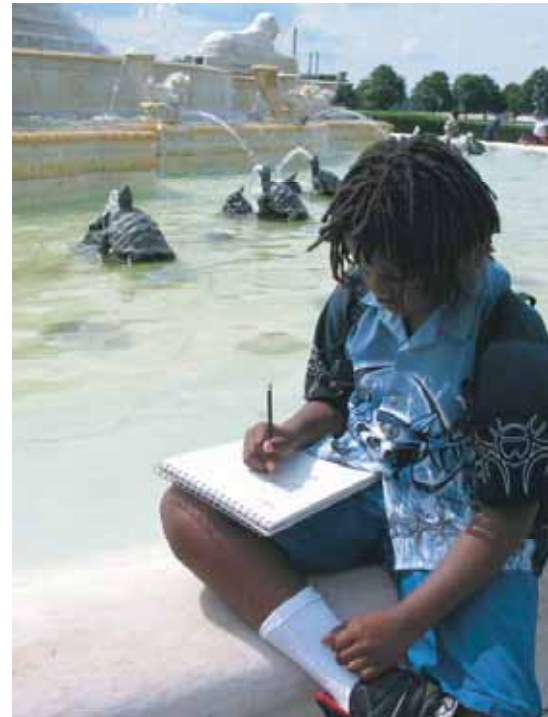
"The world is but a canvas  
to the imagination."

Henry David Thoreau

The Skillman Foundation launched the Culture & Arts Youth Development Initiative (CAYDI) in late 2003 with an initial investment of \$5 million in grant funds over five years. Through CAYDI, the Foundation works to ensure that young people living in under-resourced neighborhoods have opportunities to be fed, nurtured and creators of art and culture-to expand their worlds and enrich others' by enlarging the canvases of their imaginations and providing the resources and tools for them to learn and take action.

The creation of this Initiative was a major shift from the Foundation's previous general operations support of major Detroit cultural arts organizations. The Foundation sought to make culture and arts programs more available to young people in poor neighborhoods throughout Detroit, and demonstrate that culture and arts programs result in positive developmental outcomes. More recently, the Foundation has further sharpened its focus with its Good Neighborhoods Initiative, which is supporting youth development<sup>4</sup> programs that provide "long-term exposure to the arts" and "strengthen young people by increasing their leadership skills and resiliency, helping them to be ready for life, college, work and ultimately becoming contributing citizens."<sup>5</sup>

In short, CAYDI addresses three goals: involve youth, ages 11 to 18, in the creative process of the arts; engage youth in high-quality, long-term experiences creating art; and grow and develop youth using the arts.<sup>6</sup>



College For Creative Studies, Detroit Neighborhood Arts Workshops

# Background

CAYDI grantees ranged from "pillar" organizations, like the symphony, to public schools and the City of Detroit Recreation Department; from well-established, multi-purpose, community-based agencies; to small, more focused organizations, all with differing management, youth development, and arts and culture expertise. Knowing this, capacity building was a priority for the Foundation from the beginning. Since the grantees reported scarce funds for training, technical assistance and conferences, the Foundation offered high-quality learning opportunities at no cost. These opportunities included a conscious effort to create a learning community among grantees and offered four training sessions at the regularly held quarterly grantee meetings, two travel seminars to culture and arts programs in other cities, and scholarships for six grantees to participate in a statewide leadership academy specifically designed for people working in and for the arts.



Mural Arts Program - Philadelphia, PA

# Background

**"CAYDI programs reflect the uniqueness of Detroit—that is, the programs grew out of local assets and needs. And while they are local, we believe the programs can stand side by side with national model programs in terms of quality, impact and positive outcomes."**

**THE SKILLMAN FOUNDATION**

Sharnita C. Johnson, Program Officer

- 4 The Foundation describes youth development programs as "age-appropriate, high-quality, out-of-school time programs for children and youth."
- 5 The Skillman Foundation (2006). "The Good Neighborhoods Initiative."
- 6 The Foundation is interested in projects that expand long-term programming based on the interests and needs of youth in neighborhoods; build the capacity of programs to work with youth using best practices in the field; and test new ideas in youth development through arts and culture. Over the past three years, projects that enhance and build the teaching skills of professional artists engaged in long-term, creative activities with youth were asked to apply directly to the Foundation, as were other projects representing collaborations of artists, culture and arts organizations, and youth development organizations.



# FINDINGS



# FINDINGS

# Learning Questions:

Do culture and arts programs foster positive youth development and, if so, how?

What key elements and best practices can be identified from research and CAYDI grantees?

## Rigor, Relevance and Relationships

Exploring and being trained in art forms can be a powerful vehicle for learning a broad range of knowledge and transferable skills. Understanding the link culture and arts programs can have to specific knowledge and skill sets is directly tied to the expectations teacher-artists have of their students. Researchers and youth development practitioners have found evidence that arts education can contribute significantly to young people's cognitive and social development as they:

- Provide young people with different ways to process cognitive information and express their own knowledge;
- Develop vocabulary, metaphorical language, observation and critical thinking skills;
- Spur the development of creativity;
- Develop skills important for future employment;
- Help youth in their struggle with issues of identity, independence, competence, body image and social roles;
- Teach the value of discipline and teamwork; and
- Bridge barriers among cultural, racial and ethnic groups.<sup>7</sup>

The confidence young people can gain from finding and expressing their voices through art can carry beyond art-specific activities. One CAYDI grantee noted that students can achieve self-confidence with language, develop an awareness of [it] as something powerful, and recognize their personal voice—that their own words can get them heard and their ideas are very important.

Further, well-conceived programs create environments that combine heightened risk—through socially visible performances and peer critiques—with dynamic rules that structure participants' behaviors and encourage personal and group



Michigan Opera Theatre

<sup>7</sup> Weitz, J. H. (1996). *Coming Up Taller: Arts and Humanities Programs for Children and Youth at Risk*. Washington, DC: The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

<sup>8</sup> Heath, S. B. and E. Soep (1998). *The Work of Learning at Youth-based Organizations: A Case for the Arts*.

<sup>9</sup> Heath, S. B. and A. Roach (1998). *The Arts in the Nonschool Hours: Strategic Opportunities for Meeting the Educational, Civic Learning, and Job-training Goals of America's Youth*, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Stone, A., T. Bikson, et al. (1998). *The Arts and Prosocial Impact Study: Program Characteristics and Prosocial Effects*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

accountability.<sup>8</sup> High-quality youth programs "demand an unrelenting accountability to excellent performance before authentic audiences."<sup>9</sup> In fact, an emphasis on performance and presentation is one of the program features most strongly associated with positive impact on participants' development.<sup>10</sup>

Most CAYDI program leaders cited the three "R's"—rigor, relevance, and relationships—as necessary ingredients for high-quality arts and culture programs that foster positive youth development.

- *Rigor* relates to establishing high expectations for young people's behaviors and efforts, and in this case, offering high-quality programs. Ability to successfully set high expectations involves three critical building blocks: recruiting, training, and retaining highly qualified teacher-artists.<sup>11</sup>
- *Relevance* relates to creating experiences that are practical and equip young people for life, college, work and community engagement.
- *Meaningful, trusting relationships* enhance participants' abilities to engage in the programs and thus maximize impact.

**"Children  
are expected to do great things."**  
Detroit Symphony Orchestra

## Rigor

Youth development research confirms that the most effective youth development programs have clear rules about expected behaviors, set high expectations for young people, monitor young people's behaviors and performance, and hire adults with whom young people can establish trust.<sup>12</sup> A constant theme in the Brandeis interviews was the importance of the relationship between program quality and the presence of talented and skilled teacher-artists. All CAYDI grantees agreed that hiring and retention of experienced artists trained in youth development ranks among the top items on the "to do" list.<sup>13</sup>

Genuine engagement enhances youth participation and learning. Researchers have also found that a structure appropriate to the activity is necessary for students to become engaged in youth development programming.<sup>14</sup> Further, providing opportunities for youth to take on increasingly active roles in governance, rule setting, and leadership improves participation.<sup>15</sup> CAYDI grantees, for the most part, reported recognizing the importance of



The Urban Artist Collective, Vanguard Community Development Corporation  
Photo credit: Camille Williams, Student, Focus On The Mission

<sup>11</sup> The term "teacher-artist" is used interchangeably throughout this monograph with "artist" and "staff" unless otherwise noted.

<sup>12</sup> National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002). Community programs to promote youth development. Eccles, J. & Gootman, J.A., Eds. Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth, Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

<sup>13</sup> Stone, et al. (1997).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002).



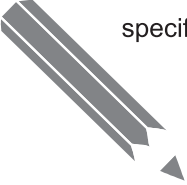
Cable Communications Public Benefit Corporation, SCOOP  
Photo Credit: Austin Monroe, Student, Focus Hope: Focus On The Mission Excel

such structure and opportunities. They frequently mentioned that the youth development training teacher-artists received helped them provide the needed guidelines and boundaries while encouraging student participation in project development and decision-making.

When we asked, "What makes a quality youth development program?" the most common response was, "youth involvement." Almost all respondents talked extensively about the need to involve youth in a meaningful way—giving them a voice in the program. The underlying theme was that these programs build writing, acting, music, and other skills while providing

opportunities for youth to "find and express their voices" via the artistic process and active engagement in program design and implementation.

Recruiting and training talented teacher-artists in educational and youth development techniques is only the first step. Program staff noted they must keep supporting them over time. They identified three specific strategies that can play an important role in retaining teacher-artists:

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1. Offer teacher-artists strong administrative support, feedback about what they are doing, adequate space, and the supplies, resources, and equipment they need.
  2. Secure strong buy-in from school administrators for school-based programs.
  3. Pay teacher-artists well and offer on-going professional development opportunities.

## *Relevance*

The life lessons and skills young people develop and enhance through the programs and final performances and presentations demonstrate that the arts are a vehicle for learning, and carry over to the classroom, expose them to career options, help young people find their voices, and value diversity.

CAYDI program leaders strongly believe that participation in culture and arts programs improves participants' self efficacy, ability to work with others, marketable skills, and general quality of life. They went on to add that as they develop their art, participants use and learn a wide array of the skills and competencies that workers need in order to thrive in 21st century, high-performance workplaces. These important skills and competencies are portable, geographically transferable, highly marketable across local and national labor markets, and valuable in life. They include reading and writing, leadership, project management, teamwork, time management, decision-making, creative thinking, visioning—seeing things in the mind's eye—and working with diversity.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> To see a complete list of skills from US Department of Labor's Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), see <http://wdr.doleta.gov/SCANS/whatwork/>.



At most CAYDI programs young people learn how to plan and manage complex projects. One program participant said that students learn how to deal with "crazy time constraints." The students must produce and meet deadlines, even with very tight time constraints. Another student said, "You have to learn that you're running a business every day. Communication and stuff like that." Another stated, "If you're running a commercial, you have to know who your producer is, who's gonna [handle things], and who's gonna set it up."

Participants in CAYDI programs Brandeis studied stated they also gain specific arts skills and knowledge and have the opportunity to identify potential arts-related career paths, such as graphic design, writing or theater production. Our study found that they can also learn generic career skills that will help in non-arts-related careers. Several programs offer a ladder of opportunities for students to advance as they master skills in a particular artistic discipline. The critical point here is that CAYDI programs grounded in best practice offer project-based learning<sup>17</sup> activities for youth—recognizing that youth work is about delivery of products and learning.

Finally, preparations for performances stimulate responsibility: "Now I know I have to work hard," said one youth. Across many CAYDI programs, participants reported learning habits of hard work, persistence, and the meaning of commitment—to themselves, their colleagues, the adults who work with them, and their audiences or clients. Preparation and actual performance are also important ways for young people to achieve public recognition for their efforts, skills, artistry, and creativity.<sup>18</sup> Staff and participants from CAYDI programs said final performances provide opportunities for young people to:

- showcase their efforts to an audience whom they care about;
- plan and manage projects and deliver polished final products;
- demonstrate that youth have voices and that their voices matter; and
- gain a satisfying experience of "completion."

**"I don't allow kids to say  
'I can't do that.'  
I get them to allow the  
artistic process to take them  
wherever it's going."**

**College For Creative Studies**

Communities In Schools, Detroit Public Schools  
Photo Credit: Anahli Vazquez, Student, Focus on the Mission Excel



<sup>17</sup> Project-based learning, as defined by the Buck Institute for Education (1998), "focuses on the central concepts and principles of a discipline, involves students in problem-solving investigations and other meaningful tasks, allows students to work autonomously to construct their own knowledge, and culminates in realistic products."

<sup>18</sup> Farnum, M. and R. Schaffer. (1998). YouthARTS Handbook: Arts Programs for Youth at Risk. Washington, DC: Americans for the Arts.

## Relationships

One of the most important factors in the success of youth organizations in achieving positive outcomes with youth is the relationship between participants and the adults who work with them. Further, the program must make a mentoring-type relationship between the adults and young people a core feature. These mentoring-type behaviors by the teacher-artists include:

- “Fostering youth initiative;
- Socializing youth to specific positive identities;
- Providing opportunities for youth skill development;
- Providing helpful feedback to youth;
- Providing emotional support;
- Promoting codeswitching [the ability to alternate or mix languages or language varieties];
- Serving as positive role models; and
- Socializing peer friendship groups.”<sup>20</sup>

Staff pointed out that youth engagement evolves through mutual trust and respect. CAYDI program teachers who remember what it was like to navigate the world as a younger person reported being able to interact with students in ways that quickly build trust. Almost all CAYDI program staff mentioned the importance of respecting students and the value of providing opportunities for students to gain the respect of their peers and teachers through student-led decision-making related to program design and implementation, including establishing rules.

VSA Arts of Michigan

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of Education & National Endowment for the Arts. How the Arts Can Enhance After-School Programs; <http://www.arts.gov/pub/ArtsAfterSchool/artsedpub.html>; August 2, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> Hirsch, B. (2006). A Place to Call Home: After-School Programs for Urban Youth. Washington, DC, American Psychological Association.

Students readily commented on their relationships with their teachers and their instructional styles. When asked to describe their relationships with teachers at one CAYDI program, young people, in referring to the adults in the program, said:

“ “They're ... like an older sister.”  
“If you do something wrong, they don't say, 'Don't do it.' They say, 'Why not do it?' Then they say, 'Why not do it [this way]?’”  
“Sometimes there are things you can't talk to your parents about; but, you will talk with them.”  
“They listen to me.” ”

In these and other comments, students made clear that they appreciated the teachers' structure, criticism, wisdom, and sometimes firmness—not that they always liked it when it happened. On the other hand, they said they liked the encouragement to use constructive criticism as a means to improve their work.

InsideOut Literary Arts Project

CAYDI program staff consistently noted that the continued emphasis by The Skillman Foundation on high-quality, youth development training, which emphasizes the adult-youth relationship among other key elements, has had a positive impact on their ability to engage young people and effectively facilitate their learning. Most staff have taken advantage of youth development training and have incorporated youth development principles and practice into their programs.

# Findings

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## *Creating Safe Places to Take Risks*

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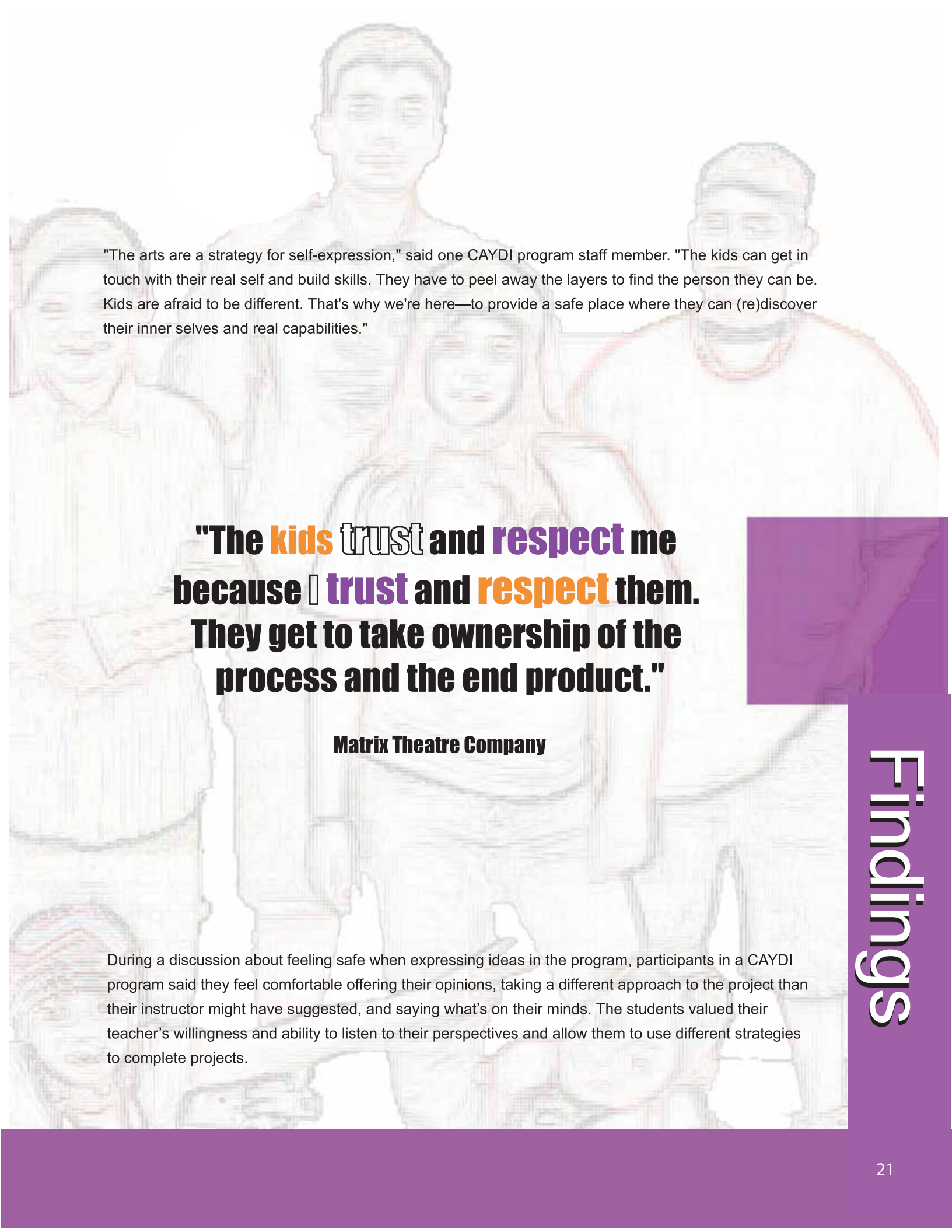
There is a natural tension between setting high standards and engaging students, yet both researchers and CAYDI practitioners stressed that one strategy for reducing potential negative consequences of setting high standards is by creating safe places to take risks. Both physical and psychological safety is a prerequisite to the positive outcomes youth development programs seek to achieve.<sup>21</sup> Young people's sense of belonging is enhanced when they feel physically and psychologically safe.<sup>22</sup> This sense of belonging lays the foundation for student engagement, and engagement correlates with positive outcomes.

As one CAYDI staff person explained, "Sense of belonging is a big outcome. I like to hear students say, 'I'm always going to be a part of this.' Kids see [our program] as a place to hang out and to build friendships." These sentiments are common to many other CAYDI programs—they seek to develop an atmosphere in which students know they are unconditionally accepted.

Safe places must also be free from violence and unsafe health conditions.<sup>23</sup> Researchers have found that when communities are unsafe, the need for secure after-school programs increases.<sup>24</sup> Many CAYDI program staff described the neighborhoods in which they operate not necessarily as "unsafe" but as offering youth many opportunities to engage in inappropriate or negative behaviors, thereby heightening the importance of offering a physically and psychologically safe program.

Almost all CAYDI staff described creating and maintaining physically and psychologically safe places where young people can take risks, speak their minds, and express creative opinions as necessary for achieving programs' intended outcomes. CAYDI grantees believe their programs offer safe places for youth to uncover their "real" selves. The processes of learning an art form and the processes of making art tap into abilities and talents students may not have exercised in traditional educational or after-school settings.

<sup>21</sup> National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002). Community programs to promote youth development.  
<sup>22</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>23</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



"The arts are a strategy for self-expression," said one CAYDI program staff member. "The kids can get in touch with their real self and build skills. They have to peel away the layers to find the person they can be. Kids are afraid to be different. That's why we're here—to provide a safe place where they can (re)discover their inner selves and real capabilities."

**"The kids trust and respect me because I trust and respect them. They get to take ownership of the process and the end product."**

**Matrix Theatre Company**

During a discussion about feeling safe when expressing ideas in the program, participants in a CAYDI program said they feel comfortable offering their opinions, taking a different approach to the project than their instructor might have suggested, and saying what's on their minds. The students valued their teacher's willingness and ability to listen to their perspectives and allow them to use different strategies to complete projects.

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# Bringing Family, Schools and Community Together

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Artistic performances can help create and sustain a broad web of relationships among parents, neighbors, teachers, schools, and other community institutions and positively change the ways in which young people are seen. Although CAYDI grantees primarily focus on teaching artistic skills and enhancing youth development, Brandeis evaluators observed that CAYDI programs can also be powerful vehicles for building community and bringing families, schools, and communities together.

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## Family

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All CAYDI programs reported reaching out to parents to involve them in the programs and their children's participation and achievement. Program staff recognize that parental involvement is important to:

- Improve parental understanding of what their children do and what they accomplish in the program;
- Encourage parents to support their children's participation;
- Enhance parents' pride in their children's accomplishments; and
- Expose parents to professional quality arts and culture.

CAYDI programs reported using several methods to increase parental involvement, albeit with mixed success. These methods included:

- Requiring parents to attend at least part of the application process or an orientation session;
- Requiring parents to sign an agreement or commitment letter;
- Developing a parent handbook that describes what children will be doing, opportunities for parent involvement, and expectations for parental support and encouragement;
- Creating specific volunteer opportunities for parents;
- Having a formal parent advisory group;
- Organizing a parental support group to raise funds for the program; and
- Inviting parents to special events showcasing their children's participation.

While the CAYDI program staff recognized the importance of parental involvement and have used a variety of techniques to encourage it, nearly all said that it is a continuing challenge to develop and sustain it. In some cases, staff explained that parents simply do not have the time to participate, particularly if they are single. Some young people reported being uncomfortable having their parents directly involved. Without exception, however, program staff said their first responsibility is to the young person and they would not make participation contingent on parental involvement.

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## *Schools*

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Over the past decade, the Detroit Public Schools have eliminated many culture and arts programs. One objective of CAYDI is, at least in some part, to compensate for this loss. The initiative does so by providing:

- A grant to one organization to broker connections among public schools and an array of culture and arts organizations and individual artists; and
- Grants to other organizations that offer culture and arts programs in school buildings.

Many of the CAYDI grantees work with the schools to recruit students for their in-house programs and/or offer after-school programs on school property. One grantee supports an array of creative arts programs—working with 22 well-known arts organizations to partner with 11 public schools. These schools are a mix of high-performing "schools of choice," middle-quality schools, and low-performing schools in a range of neighborhoods across the city of Detroit.

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## *The Larger Community*

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CAYDI grantees report connecting with the larger community in different ways and with different objectives, but without exception they reach out—primarily through artistic performance. Performances provide entertainment, raise funds, bring diverse sectors of the community together for shared and positive activities, and demonstrate the capabilities of young people.

In the past few years The Skillman Foundation began encouraging its grantees to offer programs to young people living in neighborhoods with few resources. Where it made sense, CAYDI grantees have established satellite operations, expanded programs or begun intentional recruitment and engagement of young people from these neighborhoods. That said, many CAYDI grantees are neighborhood-based organizations that recruit youth from the neighborhood and use their own facilities for program activities. One grantee uses its base in southwest Detroit to reach out to schools and other community organizations to recruit young people and organize performances.

Another grantee, which has its own facilities in two neighborhoods, sees its mission as broadening the range of opportunities available to young people in impoverished neighborhoods. Programs with neighborhood-based facilities that recruit from within the neighborhood have the potential to be important actors in community development. Many CAYDI grantees reported they have learned care must be taken to realize this potential—it takes time to build relationships with other organizations, and the program must be seen as giving back to the community, not just using precious space and resources.

Two CAYDI grantees partnered to operate a program for Latino young artists in southwest Detroit. Adapting its approach to the culture of the neighborhood, one program, which usually closes its practices to parents so young people feel more comfortable taking risks, changed its stance about parent presence and encourages them to come to rehearsal to watch their children. The staff learned that parents in this neighborhood are less likely to let their children attend if the parents don't know the program. The partnership team also has hired a community liaison whose job is to get to know parents and the neighborhood.

The staff in a CAYDI program said their experience shows that an organization needs to develop a sound plan before forming a partnership with neighborhood recreation centers. In planning their program the designers had originally envisioned the centers providing additional resources and a cohort of young people who would come to the centers regularly and be a natural source of participants for the program. Instead, they learned the centers often have limited, even unstable funding, and typically operate using a “drop-in” approach with sporadic rather than regularly scheduled attendance. Staff found it difficult to establish a traditional program where classes build on one another. They will continue to work through neighborhood recreation centers but have modified their expectations and approach based on the lessons learned during the first year. The staff are excited about the possibility that its highly skilled teachers will draw more young people to regularly participate in its neighborhood-based programs over time.



Matrix Theatre Company and Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit



Arts participation can benefit not only the young artists, but also their communities. Research documents that public artistic performance significantly changes the way young people are seen in their neighborhoods and in the larger community. These performances demonstrate young people's talents, technical skills, knowledge, and social capacities.<sup>25</sup> As one CAYDI staff member put it, "We started with the community and then figured out our focus on art, not vice-versa. We help kids learn a skill and contribute to the community... they need to know they are contributing to the community."

**W**e started with the **community** and then figured out **our** focus on **art**, not **vice-versa** . **We** help **kids** learn a **skill** and contribute to the **community**... they need to know they are contributing to the **community**.

**Vanguard Community  
Development Corporation**

The focus of CAYDI programs is primarily on the young people they attract, whose talents they seek to develop, and whose life trajectories they try to change. Through teaching and performance, the arts and culture programs in the Brandeis study appeared to have the potential to positively affect the community at many levels.

## ***Managing for Quality and Sustainability Creating a Learning Community***

As noted previously, capacity building was designed into CAYDI from the beginning. Grantees meet at least quarterly and often more frequently, based on a mutually established training agenda. In 2005 and 2006 they participated in a visioning and mission development session conducted by the Communication for Social Change Consortium to establish a focus and direction; and training sessions on community youth development led by Brandeis University, fund development by Kim Klein, and the after-school program data system managed by Mayor's Time and Michigan State University. Further, grantees have participated in two travel seminars, one to Philadelphia and the other to Minneapolis. The goal of the trips was to expose grantees to similar types of organizations in other cities in order to stimulate new learning and develop relationships with colleagues with whom they could share lessons, work products and strategies, and experiences.

<sup>25</sup> See Shirley Brice Heath and Adelman Roach (1998). "Imaginative Actuality: Learning in the Arts during Nonschool Hours," *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*.

Finally, six grantees were given scholarships to participate in the Michigan Association of Community Arts Agencies (MACAA) Leadership Academy from May to September 2005. According to MACAA, this "in-service program designed specifically for arts and cultural leaders, confronts the challenges and issues community leaders face every day. The program is participant-centered in a supportive, retreat-type environment." The academy brings in nationally recognized faculty who "present up-to-date theory and application of the best in leadership knowledge and practice." The CAYDI grantees also learn and test new skills with other workers in and for community arts.<sup>26</sup>

Without exception, CAYDI program staff commented highly favorably on the learning community of their peers that is gradually developing, the opportunities they have had for their own learning, and the positive impact both have had on the development of their programs and organizations.

## CAYDI funding offers grantees:

- **Financial stability and funds to do many things they consider important;**
- **Formal connections to other similar organizations - a peer group that can share approaches and issues;**
- **Credibility through association with Skillman as one of its grantees (small neighborhood organizations need this); and**
- **Capacity-building opportunities."**

Matrix Theatre Company



Detroit Civic Philharmonic  
Photo Credit: George Waldman, The Skillman Foundation

## *Evaluation as a Learning and Management Tool*

Evaluation can be a valuable resource for culture and arts programs when carefully designed and implemented. The following lessons have been found by researchers to be important:

- clearly define the program goals and intended outcomes, and monitor and document the program implementation and service-delivery process;
- use process evaluations, which examine program implementation and service delivery, to describe the program and provide an avenue to continually refine the program;
- the measures most frequently used to determine the effects of arts programs on youth at risk are journals, portfolios, surveys, and artist observations;
- program-specific factors such as staff ratios, hours of contact, and duration of contact are likely to have a major impact on program outcomes; and
- individual, family, and community factors may influence program outcomes.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.macaa.com/leadershipacademy.htm#Overview>  
<sup>27</sup> Farnum, M. and R. Schaffer (1998).

We would add that the Brandeis study underway of program quality on youth outcomes is critical for being able to answer the "so what?" questions ("what is the added power of combining youth development principles with arts and culture programs?" and "what outcomes can be expected from well executed programs?") and for program sustainability. Knowing the impact of the programs can help change policy and practice and shift resources.

Further, we would make the case that the long-term sustainability of after-school programs will be enhanced if they work toward a goal of "creating a quality culture" which can be understood as intentional focus on building organizational assets and using a quality management model that can be used to take stock of and improve programs.<sup>28</sup>



Michigan Opera Theatre

Several CAYDI grantees have engaged evaluators for their programs. By far the majority of staff with whom we spoke were eager to learn more about how effective their programs are and desired tools to obtain reliable, usable data. Several grantees felt prepared to be involved in the program quality and youth outcome evaluation being conducted by Brandeis in 2006-2007. The chief concern staff voiced was having cumbersome tools and processes that would impose a burden on already over-worked staff. They worried about how to begin from scratch setting up systems or interfacing new data collection systems and evaluation plans with ones they already had in place; training staff (especially those who are part-time and tend to turn over frequently) in use of the management information system; and having time to review data that is collected, much less process it. Yet, they acknowledged that evaluation results could help them prove the impact of their programs, raise funds from other sources, and improve their operations.

<sup>28</sup> Hughes, D. and Curnan, S. (2005). "The Q Factor: Practitioners' Perspectives on Building a Culture of Quality in After-School Programs." A report for the W.T. Grant Foundation.

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e began our study with the following learning questions:

- ~ Do culture and arts programs foster positive youth development and, if so, how?
- ~ What key elements and best practices can be identified from research and CAYDI grantees?
- ~ Is there added "power" for young people in the combination of youth development principles and culture and arts programs? Specifically, what outcomes are likely when the combination is well executed?

In summary, early findings from the Brandeis study of CAYDI grantees and the scholarly literature are:

1

**Culture and arts programs can foster positive youth development when they:**

- ~ are rigorous, i.e., recruit, train and retain effective teacher-artists who can engage young people and facilitate their leadership development;
- ~ are relevant, i.e., provide practical experiences that equip young people for life, college, work and community engagement; and
- ~ create trusting, mentoring relationships between teacher-artists and participants.

**Key elements and best practices that must be in place to support positive youth development and sustainable programs are:**

- ~ physical and psychological safety;
- ~ an appropriately structured environment;
- ~ meaningful opportunities for participants to assume key leadership roles in the program;
- ~ easy access (close proximity or transportation available, out-of-school time, affordable) so young people can take advantage of the opportunities;
- ~ mechanisms to engage family members, the schools and the larger community; and
- ~ an organizational culture that focuses on collecting data to assess outcomes and improve programs, practice and policy.

**Arts and culture programs can be a vehicle for young people to learn and achieve necessary knowledge, skills and abilities in addition to enjoying creative work when intentional focus is placed on project-based learning, i.e., linking what is being learned to actual delivery of a product or performance.**

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

*These conclusions are encouraging and support the following recommendations for philanthropic entities and individuals:*

CONCLUSIONS  
RECOMMENDATIONS

**1. Provide general operating funding that supports neighborhood-based:**

- a. Arts and culture programs working with young people;
- b. Youth development programs with a formal arts and/or culture emphasis; and
- c. Arts and culture programs that use local, indigenous talent.

**2. Formalize and track youth development and organizational capacity-building efforts, including sustainability planning.**

- a. Assess grantees' needs and resources;
- b. Develop a training, technical assistance, professional development, and consultation plan grounded in youth development, culture and arts, and management best practices for each organization and the group of grantees as a whole; and
- c. Annually assess with grantees what has been learned, how this has contributed to learning and improvement, and what changes should be made in the plan for the coming year.

**3. Develop and implement a strategic communication plan about their culture and arts portfolio.**

- a. Disseminate the programs' good work as a method for leveraging additional funding for arts and culture organizations.
- b. Communicate with other arts funders to stay apprised of and share policy issues, research, and best practice.
- c. Establish and use a website to communicate results of the grantmaking initiative.

**4. Support data collection and evaluation as a management and learning tool for both the grantmaker and grantees.**

- a. Train and support grantees in conducting regular assessment of their programs through program quality surveys and other tools and using the results for continuous improvement.
- b. Require grantees to participate in a centralized after-school data collection system if available and provide on-going technical assistance and support in entering accurate data and using reports.
- c. Lay the groundwork for and conduct a longitudinal evaluation of grantees to assess arts and culture and program quality impact on youth participation and outcomes.

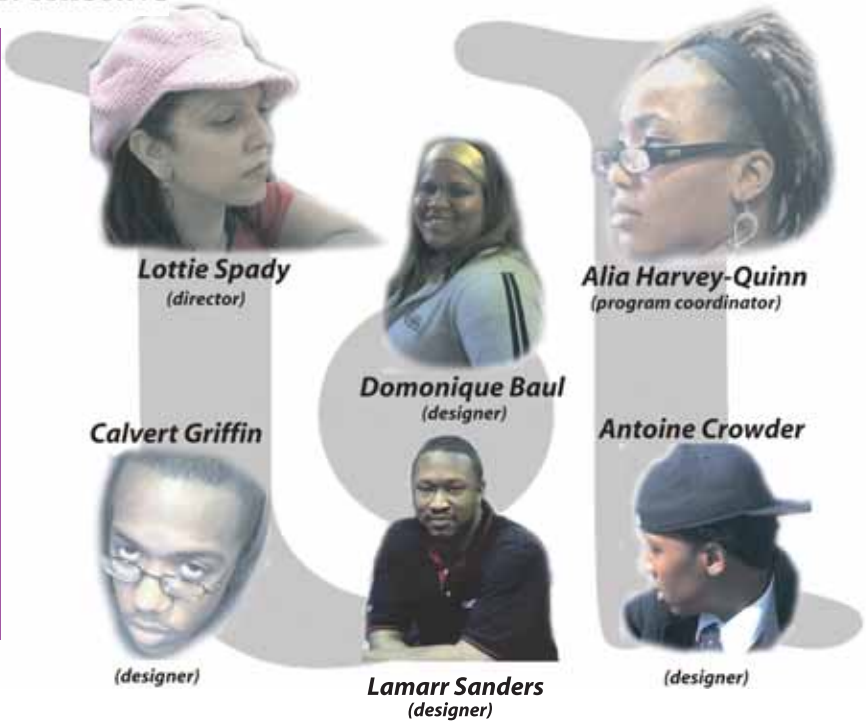


YMCA Youth Media Program  
Photo Credit: Claudia Sanchez, Student, Focus HOPE: Focus on the Mission Excel



**Vanguard Community Development Corporation's Urban Artist Collective**

engages underserved youth in positive arts programming; increases participants' knowledge and skills related to graphic, literary and performing arts; provides exhibition and public performance opportunities including portfolios, books and CDs; and provides adult and peer-to-peer youth development opportunities in a safe and supportive atmosphere



**Claudia Sanchez**



**Anahli Vazquez**



**Leslie Johnson**



**Camille Williams**



**Austin Tucker**



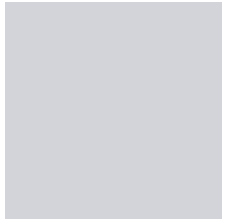
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**Focus: Hope**

**Focus on the Mission Excel Program**

partners with Detroit high schools and schools in bordering suburban communities to offer the Focus on the Mission Excel program, a community arts program emphasizing youth development and diversity through photography.





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