The Wallace Foundation

Wallace Studies in
Building Arts Audiences

STAYING RELEVANT IN A CHANGING NEIGHBORHOOD

HOW FLEISHER ART MEMORIAL IS ADAPTING TO SHIFTING COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

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PREFACE

This case study describes Fleisher Art Memorial's initiative to bring residents of the surrounding ethnically diverse neighborhood to its on-site programs. The report is part of a larger set of 10 case studies commissioned by The Wallace Foundation to explore arts organizations' efforts to reach new audiences and deepen relationships with their existing audiences. These in-depth reports lay out how the efforts were created and run, describe the results in detail, identify what helped them become successful, and show what got in the way of success. They add to a growing body of field-based research, providing specific examples of individual organizations' responses to unique circumstances. At the same time, each aspires to capture more-broadly applicable lessons about what works and what does not—and why—in building arts audiences.

The individual case studies are the products of multiple interviews with key staff and analysis of program elements, budgets, and planning documents. Unlike similar efforts, however, each draws from a multifaceted base of data and evidence collected over a period of several years, including ticket purchases, online activity, and participation in a broad array of programming, as well as qualitative and quantitative research undertaken by independent consultants and the organizations themselves to inform program development and to evaluate results. That research was integral to each program, and of such

importance that in 2015 The Wallace Foundation published a companion guide on using research to support audience building that draws from practices and examples employed across the 10 organizations, *Taking Out the Guesswork: A Guide to Using Research to Build Arts Audiences* (that report and other audience-building resources are available at http://www.wallacefoundation.org).

Each case study in this series begins with a brief executive summary and a "scene setter" describing an actual component of the program. That is followed by an overview of the environment within which the organization was operating, its audience-building challenges, and the program it built to address those challenges. Detail follows about strategy and tactics, and key decisions and adjustments made as the organization developed its approach and refined it in response to new information. Additional specifics are provided on how progress was measured and what results occurred, and an analysis highlighting elements that led to success follows.

The Fleisher Art Memorial report is part of a second round of case studies. The first round included four organizations, and this second round contains six. The 10 arts groups encompass variety in size, geography, and art form. Perhaps more importantly, each organization's strategy and set of tactics are different, providing planning details and considerations across diverse programs and circumstances.

The experiences of the organizations as a whole reveal several recurring themes. When the first four case studies were published in 2011, we highlighted five general principles:

1. Market research can sharpen engagement-strategy development and execution.
2. Audiences are open to engaging in the arts in new and different ways.
3. Audience building is an ongoing endeavor, not a one-time initiative.
4. Audience-building efforts should be fully integrated into every element of an organization's operations, not approached as a separate initiative or program.
5. Programs that emerge from a clear and well-supported organizational mission develop in environments in which they can thrive.

These themes are reinforced in the experiences of the six organizations in the second group of case studies and were more fully developed (alongside additional effective practices) in a recent Wallace Foundation publication, *The Road to Results: Effective Practices for Building Arts Audiences*.

While the individual reports provide details of particular strategies, the collective experience across the organizations also suggests that there is no one winning tactic, no killer promotion, no social media strategy that alone will help organizations build audiences in a sustainable way. Instead, successful audience building is an integrated and coordinated effort with several parts of an organization working together over several years' time, more often than not in the face of very slow progress or setbacks. It may even require a shift in the organization's internal culture, as when Fleisher Art Memorial refocused the organization at every level and across all departments to become a more inclusive institution. That said, while organizations may have to operate differently to connect with new audiences, that does not mean they need to change who they are or what they produce. In fact, such a strategy may backfire, because an audience engagement initiative that departs from an organization's mission or core values likely will not receive the broad and ongoing support needed to maintain it.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fleisher Art Memorial was created at the turn of the 20th century to bring arts education to people of diverse economic and social backgrounds living in Southeast Philadelphia. In its early decades, the school served the families of European immigrants and their descendants who lived in that section of the city, but by the end of the 20th century and moving into the new millennium, demographics in the neighborhoods surrounding Fleisher began shifting radically. The streets and homes were now filled with newly arrived and economically disadvantaged people from Latin America, China, and Southeast Asia. Yet, within the walls of Fleisher, Southeast Philadelphia's new demographic composition wasn't in evidence. Fleisher was serving these newer residents in its off-site programs, but the on-site audience had come to be populated chiefly by a white and relatively affluent clientele from other parts of the city and the nearby suburbs, many of whom were descendants of the original Fleisher student body that had moved on economically and physically. While it has never been easy for inner-city arts organizations to attract audiences that reflect the ethnic and economic diversity of the surrounding neighborhoods, that challenge posed a particularly poignant dilemma for Fleisher, which was created more than a century before for that express purpose.

The institution initially responded to this realization by designing a set of programs that it hoped would attract children and families from Southeast Philadelphia. However, research interviews with neighborhood residents and community organization leaders revealed that residents didn't recognize Fleisher as a place where they would feel welcome attending classes or even visiting. New programs weren't going to alter that sense of not belonging.

Based on at least one evidence-based model of audience building, Fleisher staff recognized that changing the way disinclined audiences see an institution is an important first step in encouraging them to take part in its programming and other activities. Relying on additional research and interaction with the surrounding communities, Fleisher concluded that it needed to accomplish two things before residents would be willing to engage with the school:

1. Build awareness of Fleisher and, more importantly, a sense of trust among the various Southeast Philadelphia communities through an increased presence at neighborhood events and in other aspects of community life

2. Create an inclusive environment at the art school, so that anyone who walked through Fleisher's doors would feel entitled and enabled to participate

Through staff training, relationship building, and a series of programs aimed at bringing Fleisher activities to neighborhood events and public spaces where residents congregate, the art school began the long process of becoming integrated with the community. This effort was about more than simply showing neighbors what the institution has to offer. To succeed, Fleisher staff members believed they had to transform the institution's priorities and processes and demonstrate convincingly

to the communities it sought to serve that their residents were welcome at the school and could expect to find activities that would be relevant, affordable, and accessible.

So far, research shows that Fleisher has been making significant inroads, particularly in changing perceptions of Fleisher and its commitment to serving local residents, immigrants, and the economically disadvantaged. The school also has made headway in encouraging more residents from the surrounding neighborhoods to take classes: One-quarter of the students in on-site classes and workshops now come from Southeast Philadelphia, up from one-fifth, and teens and children from that area now constitute 36 percent of Fleisher's on-site youth programs, up from 25 percent. For now, the additions from Southeast Philadelphia seem to match the demographic mix of students already taking classes, but as audience diversification expert Donna Walker-Kuhne has noted, it can take as much as a decade to change the demographics of an institution's users.

Fleisher also has become an active neighborhood participant. Its annual *ARTspiration!* festival has been drawing large numbers of neighborhood residents, and Fleisher's art-making activities are a regular presence at community festivals as well as at formal and informal gathering places.

Still, the work has just begun. Fleisher staff members see their efforts to date as only the first steps in transforming how the organization relates to the communities it hopes to serve. The focus on internal operations constitutes the jumping-off point for a more involved paradigm shift that will see Fleisher continuing to work itself more deeply into the fabric of the community.

Amid the summer greens of tree-lined Catharine Street, between Seventh and Eighth, spring the bright reds, blues, and yellows of carnival canopies on this overcast day in early June. In the air, perfumed with the pungent aromas of tacos, Italian meatballs, and sugary pineapple drinks, are the sounds of traditional Khmer and Mexican folk melodies punctuated by boom-box blasts from nearby break dancing. Skipping through the leisurely crowds and racing between booths are the painted faces of fierce tigers, fluttery butterflies, and playful kittens. The scene is ARTspiration!*, an annual day when Fleisher Art Memorial shares with its Southeast Philadelphia neighbors some hands-on moments with art.*

Both sides of the street, now empty of cars, are lined with vendors from the community selling wares or conducting their own art projects. To the left is Isaiah Zagar's Magic Gardens mosaic stand, where festivalgoers can create colorful tile creations; to the right, the Free Library of Philadelphia helps children design bookmarks for their summer reading. The brick-red mats of the Zhang Sah karate studio are lined up, with agile fighters performing kicks and jabs for eager fans hoping for a chance to learn. And Smith Memorial Playground instructors demonstrate the fine art of kite making.

In Palumbo Park, next to the Fleisher building, a teacher from the school reveals the technique behind Nigerian pottery making on a slab tile. There also are easels where wannabe artists can try their hand at sketching models in colorful flamenco costumes. There's a demonstration on how to sketch on your iPad. The brick-floored, postage stamp–sized park, bordered on one side by a Fleisher instructor's

mural of a tranquil autumn woods scene, has become a favorite spot for parents waiting for their children taking art classes at the school. Today, instructors are using the park to show off some of the art techniques adults might study during Fleisher's summer session.

Across the street from Fleisher, the school's ColorWheels van—chock-full of art supplies—hosts children and parents who are busily designing multicolored yarn pom-poms. Teenagers from Fleisher's after-school program are busy running booths and handing out information and maps. Nearby, members of another neighborhood teen program are finishing a demonstration of their break-dancing prowess and will move on to teach would-be hip-hoppers some moves; the Cambodian dance troupe—made up of students in Fleisher's class on Cambodian dance—will do the same later in the day. This year, for the first time, ARTspiration! *also will feature an exotically costumed Aztec dance group from Philadelphia.*

ARTspiration! *was begun in 2007 to give the Fleisher staff an opportunity to show off what the school offers and get to know the people who live near their workplace. For the past several years, Fleisher has been working closely with the Southeast Philadelphia Collaborative—of which it is a founding member—to get the word out about* ARTspiration! *and engage some of the newer residents in the neighboring ethnic communities.*

"This year represents the most naturally diverse group we've ever had attending," says Nicole Krom, manager of audience engagement for Fleisher. "And it's all organic, which made the result even better."

KEEPING PACE WITH DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

Many urban arts organizations have been seeing neighborhoods change around them and wondering if they are keeping pace. That's not surprising in light of U.S. census data documenting pivotal shifts across the country in racial and ethnic composition, age mix, family types, and economic circumstances that took place during the first 10 years of the new millennium.[1]

A recent Brookings Institution study concluded that U.S. metropolitan areas have been undergoing the most significant sociodemographic transformation since the huge wave of immigrants arrived in the early 20th century.[2] The foreign-born population in the United States has more than doubled, rising from 6.2 percent in 1980 to 12.9 percent in 2010. Its makeup also has been changing: In 1960, 75 percent of the U.S. foreign-born population had arrived from Europe; 50 years later, in 2010, only 12 percent originated there. In that year, 53 percent came from Latin America and 28 percent from Asia.[3]

1. James H. Johnson, Jr., and John D. Kasarda, *Six Disruptive Demographic Trends: What Census 2010 Will Reveal* (Chapel Hill, NC: Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, Kenan-Flagler Business School, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2011). https://www.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/~/media/Files/kenaninstitute/UNC_KenanInstitute_2010Census.pdf.

2. Brookings Institution, *State of Metropolitan America: On the Front Lines of Demographic Transformation* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2010).

3. U.S. Census Bureau, *America's foreign born in the last 50 years*. Retrieved from: www.census.gov/how/pdf//Foreign-Born--50-Years-Growth.pdf.

Southeast Philadelphia, where Fleisher Art Memorial is located, has been home to newly arrived immigrant communities throughout Philadelphia's history. Today it continues to be at the forefront of the city's recent demographic shifts, with new groups of immigrants from places like Cambodia, Mexico, and Vietnam moving to the neighborhood in increasing numbers over the last few decades.[4] Trying to adjust to the changed community composition created challenges for the art school. To fulfill its mission as a community organization and purveyor of arts education to the economically and ethnically diverse population in its immediate service area, Fleisher, like the neighborhoods, would also have to change.

Originally known as the Graphic Sketch Club, it was founded in 1898 by industrialist and arts patron Samuel S. Fleisher to reduce economic barriers to art making and bring diverse groups together around it. He sought to achieve these objectives by offering free art classes to children in the Southeast Philadelphia neighborhoods where many of the workers at his family-owned yarn factory lived. The classes were provided to all comers, regardless of race, means, or nationality. Enrollment rose quickly, and Fleisher bought a nearby former school building and the adjacent deconsecrated Episcopalian church to accommodate the school's growth. He created exhibition space for his private collection and works by local painters and Fleisher students, which he opened to the public. Together, the buildings make up the current site of the arts institution.

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4. Audrey Singer, Domenic Vitiello, Michael Katz, and David Park, *Recent Immigration to Philadelphia: Regional Change in a Re-emerging Gateway* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2008), 15.

1. FLEISHER ART MEMORIAL TODAY

After Fleisher's death in 1944, the Graphic Sketch Club was left in trust to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which changed its name to the Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial. In 1983, the school was spun off as an independent nonprofit with a separate board of trustees.

Today, Fleisher focuses on three main program areas:
1. Tuition-free classes and low-cost workshops that annually serve 3,000 to 4,000 adults and close to 2,000 children ages five and up. Areas of instruction include batik, ceramics, papermaking, kiln-fired glass fusing, portrait painting, Chinese brush painting and calligraphy, oil painting, and a range of other media forms. Students represent a diverse cross section of amateurs, professional artists, and aspiring artists.
2. Community Partnerships in the Arts, consisting of residencies by artists who provide three hours of visual art instruction per week over a period of 10 to 24 weeks to hundreds of low-income children and teenagers attending South Philadelphia public schools and community centers.
3. An exhibition series for the more than 8,000 annual visitors to Fleisher's galleries, including juried exhibitions for regional artists and exhibitions of student artworks.

2. COMING TOGETHER WITH THE NEIGHBORHOOD

While Fleisher has had relatively consistent success in attracting large numbers of students and visitors, the staff started to recognize that those taking classes on-site no

longer reflected the demographics of the rapidly changing neighborhoods surrounding Fleisher. A survey in 2006 confirmed that fewer than a quarter (23 percent) of Fleisher students came from the surrounding neighborhoods.

The extent of the contrast between the on-site and off-site populations became particularly apparent after a 2007 reorganization by the nonprofit's new director, Matt Braun,[5] who was only the second director in its history. He designated one manager to take charge of all adult programs, whether on-site or off-site, and another to be responsible for all youth programs. Before Braun's arrival, one manager had handled all on-site programming and a second had been in charge of off-site programs, with little daily contact occurring between the two.

From the vantage points of their new positions, the managers could clearly see the discrepancies in the demographics of the on-site and off-site populations. Whereas off-site programs—held largely in Southeast Philadelphia's community centers and schools—naturally mirrored area residents' demographic composition, enrollees in on-site classes were predominantly white and affluent. There was "a sense of segregation," said Braun.

In the words of Magda Martinez, the school's director of programs, Fleisher needed to "rebalance" by attracting more people from the surrounding ethnically diverse neighborhoods to its on-site programming. Though it did not establish participation targets for particular demographic groups, the organization did set a four-year goal to have one of every three students in its on-site programs come from nearby neighborhoods.

Change carried risks. Financially, Fleisher was doing well. Its visitors at the time appeared happy with things as they were, so altering either the programming or the atmosphere could jeopardize the base Fleisher depended on. However, realizing Samuel Fleisher's vision for art making as a bridge between economic

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5. Since becoming an independent nonprofit in 1983, Fleisher has had three executive directors, including Elizabeth Grimaldi, who came on board in April 2013, and Thora Jacobson, who led Fleisher for 24 years through a period of expansion in program offerings, studio space, and gallery space.

classes and various ethnicities meant the status quo had to change.

"This institution was created so that a doctor could come here as well as the guy who tended his gardens," Martinez explained. "The idea was that if people created art together, by the time they actually began to talk to each other about their personal lives outside of this space, they had already had a very different shared experience with one another and saw each other as creative beings first."

The challenge, as Braun saw it, lay in changing Fleisher enough that people living in the homes that had once sheltered Samuel Fleisher's workers would feel welcome, while still sustaining the school's relationship with loyal students and supporters who had been involved with the organization for decades—some, in fact, whose ancestors living in Southeast Philadelphia had partaken of Fleisher's offerings in its early days. Braun needed to turn Fleisher "into something that would be more vibrant and modern feeling without losing the comfort that people really valued."

Fleisher targeted nearby Southeast Philadelphia neighborhoods housing large populations of the same kind of poor working-class, newly arrived immigrants that the students of the original Graphic Sketch Club had been, though the ethnicities represented had changed. The school focused on two ZIP codes having a combined population of 85,000—19147, Fleisher's own, and 19148, immediately to the south. (Figure 1 shows Southeast Philadelphia and Fleisher's location within it.)

This geographic focus made sense because of the proximity and demographics of the two neighborhoods. It also would allow Fleisher to build upon relationships developed through off-site programs it offered in schools and through its partnership with the Southeast Philadelphia Collaborative (SEPC).

Figure 1. Central and South Philadelphia and Fleisher Art Memorial's Location

Fleisher was a founding member of the SEPC, an umbrella social services group that defines these two ZIP codes as its service area (see sidebar, *Fleisher and the Southeast Philadelphia Collaborative*). It helped that the territory wasn't completely unfamiliar to staff members who had been involved in off-site programs. Still, both Fleisher and SEPC leaders recognized that convincing residents to leave their somewhat insular communities to attend classes at the art school would not be an easy task, even with this head start.

FLEISHER AND THE SOUTHEAST PHILADELPHIA COLLABORATIVE

Since its inception in 1999, the Southeast Philadelphia Collaborative (SEPC) has served as the primary network for after-school programming in Southeast Philadelphia, addressing the lack of learning and social opportunities for teenagers. While other member agencies, like Fleisher, work with broader constituencies, the Collaborative pools the expertise, experience, programs, and resources of its seven neighborhood-based organizations to provide coordinated services for young people. (A list of member organizations is included as Appendix A.)

The youth-focused umbrella organization has staff separate from the member groups who provide technical assistance in several areas, including marketing, fundraising, planning and promoting events, social media use, and program evaluation. The group also receives resources from dozens of partner organizations dedicated to serving kids.

As one of the founding members, Fleisher had built trust with the leaders of the other participating nonprofits that facilitated its identification of opportunities to bring art making to the neighborhoods and introduce itself to their constituents. In the early stages, those efforts were predominantly aimed at children and teens under the age of 18.

One project at Fleisher that sprang from the SEPC affiliation was its Teen Lounge, a safe and supportive after-school environment where teenagers could develop skills in and an appreciation for art. Eventually, Fleisher was able to use its enthusiastic participation in SEPC to increase awareness of its offerings and develop relationships with other age groups.

"Fleisher has always been one of the most highly engaged of the seven network agencies," Francis Carney, executive director of United Communities Southeast Philadelphia, an SEPC member nonprofit, said. "They've always been very much at the table and very much wanting to be part of the conversation."

Regular interaction with the Collaborative keeps Fleisher staff abreast of what is happening in the community. First, an executive council that includes the executive directors of each of the seven networking agencies meets every three months. While the purpose is to set main objectives for the Collaborative and plan ways to accomplish them, these meetings also provide a forum for organizations to share their work with one another. There also are monthly community council gatherings for program and service staff from the various member agencies that provide professional development opportunities, in addition to occasions to network and collaborate, identify partnering prospects, and build relationships.

Additionally, staff from Fleisher's Teen Lounge communicate regularly and collaborate on a number of projects with their colleagues at the two Teen Lounges run by other Collaborative members, as well as on other program-driven initiatives with different member agencies, such as residencies.

3. MOVING FROM SPECULATION TO DATA

As a first step, Fleisher engaged a Samuel S. Fels Fund Community Service summer intern—a master's student at Temple University—to conduct a community needs assessment for the two targeted ZIP codes to identify programmatic and service deficiencies, as well as practical and perceptual barriers that might deter community residents from using Fleisher's on-site programming. As part of the assessment, the intern researched how the ethnic and economic compositions of the two ZIP codes were shifting. The researcher also conducted interviews with local residents, community organization leaders (many of them SEPC members), and Fleisher staff.

As shown in Table 1, these neighborhoods differed from Philadelphia's broader metropolitan area in two significant ways: The Asian population was three times larger, percentage-wise, while the African American population was less than half. The surveyed area also had a slightly larger Latino population.

Moreover, 2000 census data revealed that these surrounding neighborhoods were dynamic, with increases of 50 percent in African American, 270 percent in Asian, and 115 percent in Hispanic populations over the preceding decade. The subsequent census, in 2010, showed that some of these trends had continued, and in fact, accelerated as in the case of the Latino population, which had grown by another 220 percent between 2000 and 2010. Asian groups had grown at the much slower rate of 34 percent, and the African American population had actually declined by 30 percent.[6] The area also was one of relative economic hardship, with a median household income of $29,390.

Table 1. Demographics of Fleisher's Target Neighborhoods, 2010

	19147 and 19148	Philadelphia Area*
White	63%	65%
Asian	15%	5%
Black or African American	9%	20%
Hispanic or Latino	11%	8%
Other	2%	2%

* The population of the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes an area within approximately a 30- to 40-mile radius of Philadelphia. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Interviews and discussions with local residents, leaders of community organizations, and Fleisher instructors, conducted as part of the needs assessment, surfaced several potential barriers that were keeping the underrepresented and newly arrived demographic groups of the neighborhoods from engaging with Fleisher, including the inability to speak and read English and concerns about immigration status. There also were practical barriers, such as the inability to leave work to bring children to and from classes and the lack of discretionary money to pay for classes or even to buy supplies for classes that were offered free.

That said, the assessment uncovered a pressing need in the various neighborhood communities for activities for very young children and parent-child classes catering to stay-at-home parents of toddlers.

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6. Census 2000. Social Explorer, (based on data from U.S. Census Bureau; accessed May 11, 2013).

PRELIMINARY PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The community needs assessment gave the staff a place to start thinking about how to attract neighborhood residents. Fleisher designed a suite of programs geared toward youth and their parents, including a full-day summer camp, free family workshops on Sunday afternoons during the school year, and an after-school arts program. To help bring those programmatic ideas to fruition, Fleisher applied for and received a $320,000 Excellence Award from The Wallace Foundation.

The Wallace award stipulated that any programs implemented would need to be based and then evaluated on more extensive research with neighborhood residents than Fleisher had at that time conducted. To manage the research process and lead relationship-building efforts with community groups, in the summer of 2008 Fleisher hired Joseph Gonzales, PhD, as manager of research and community engagement strategies. Gonzales had experience in community liaising, engagement, and research at other Philadelphia arts organizations, and brought with him several existing relationships with community organization leaders in Fleisher's target ZIP codes. To identify how best to design and promote new programs, he developed a research plan to obtain feedback over the course of the initiative from several different constituencies, including current visitors, neighborhood residents who were and were not taking part in Fleisher's programs, and leaders from neighborhood social-service organizations with which Fleisher was already working.

Gonzales designed the first phase of research, to be completed in the spring and summer of 2009, to inform program development. He set three objectives:

- Identify the demographics, attitudes, and needs of Fleisher's current visitors, including an in-depth look at those living in Southeast Philadelphia
- Uncover and analyze perceptions of Fleisher among immigrant, African American, and low-income Southeast Philadelphia residents not yet coming to Fleisher
- Document the attitudes those Southeast Philadelphia residents held toward art and what kinds of art they already pursued or would like to pursue

AUDIENCE RESEARCH REVEALS HIGH HURDLES FOR NEW PROGRAMS

This first phase of research was divided into four components, which Gonzales designed working with Fleisher's research partner, Slover Linett Audience Research.

COMPONENT #1: BASELINE VISITOR SURVEY

A survey of 1,036 visitors was conducted during the spring (n=683) and summer (n=353) semesters to identify who was participating in Fleisher's on-site programs and why.

Key findings included:

- Only 21 percent of Fleisher visitors were from the targeted Southeast Philadelphia ZIP codes, 19147 and 19148
- Based on the demographic breakdown of the targeted ZIP codes, white visitors were overly represented, while African Americans and Latinos were significantly underrepresented. The percentage of Asian visitors was similar to their representation in those ZIP codes.[7] (See Table 2.)
- When reviewing the results through the prism of the ethnic makeup of the Philadelphia metro area, the percentage of Caucasian visitors again outpaced the percentage of whites in the region, and African Americans and Latinos were underrepresented. The percentage of Asian visitors was slightly greater than within the Philadelphia region as a whole.[8] (See Table 2.)
- Nearly nine out of 10 visitors said they were mostly satisfied with their experience at Fleisher, and that the organization was good or very good at fulfilling their desire to learn something new about art and develop art skills.
- Forty percent of all visitors from Southeast Philadelphia stated that Fleisher wasn't well known in their neighborhoods, while 61 percent of African American visitors from those Southeast Philadelphia neighborhoods believed that to be the case.
- More than two-thirds of visitors believed Fleisher cares very much about serving children, teens, and beginning art students, while just more than half said Fleisher cares very much about serving Southeast Philadelphia residents. (See Table 3.) Those numbers dropped significantly when rating whether Fleisher cares very much about serving people whose cultural heritage is outside the United States (36 percent) and people who don't speak English well (26 percent). These observations indicated hurdles that Fleisher would have to surmount in order to be successful in recruiting in the targeted ZIP codes.

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7. The 3 percentage-point discrepancy between the census data and the survey result is not statistically significant because the sample size of 217 visitors from the targeted ZIP codes produces a margin of error that is too large to detect reliably a 3 percentage-point difference.

8. While there's only a 2 percentage-point difference between the proportions of Asians in the metro area census vs. in the Fleisher visitor survey, the visitor survey result is derived from a sample of 976 visitors from the Philadelphia area. This relatively larger sample size produces estimates with smaller margins of error than statistics derived from the smaller ZIP code sample, so this 2 percentage-point discrepancy is statistically significant.

Table 2. Demographics of Visitors in Fleisher Art Memorial's Target Neighborhoods

	ZIP Codes 19147 and 19148		Philadelphia Area*	
	2009 Visitor Survey	2010 Census	2009 Visitor Survey	2010 Census
	n=217		*n*=976	
White	76%	63%	72%	65%
Asian non-Hispanic	12%	15%	7%	5%
Black or African American non-Hispanic	2%	9%	7%	20%
Hispanic or Latino	3%	11%	4%	8%
Two or more races	3%	2%	6%	2%
Other (including American Indian, Alaska or Hawaii Native, other Pacific Islander)	3%	<1%	4%	<1%

* For the visitor survey, the "Philadelphia area" is defined as all visitors who complete a survey. The "Philadelphia area" census data refers to the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes an area within approximately a 30- to 40-mile radius of Philadelphia. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Table 3. Visitor Perceptions of the Constituents Fleisher Cares about Serving

In your opinion, how much does Fleisher care about serving the following?	*n*=558–788
Children	75%
People just getting started in art	76%
Teens	67%
People who know a lot about art	59%
South Philly residents	56%
People who are unemployed or don't have much money	52%
People who express creativity with crafts, etc.	52%
People whose cultural heritage is from someplace other than the U.S.	36%
People who don't speak English well	26%

Percentage is percentage of respondents selecting "very much" from among the following options: "not much," "somewhat," and "very much."

COMPONENT #2: STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS

Two focus group discussions, one with adults and the other with teens, were conducted with students from Southeast Philadelphia who were taking classes on-site at Fleisher.

The groups contained a mix of ethnicities and income levels (at least four of the eight participants in each group had an annual household income of less than $30,000). The groups discussed why participants came to Fleisher and neighborhood perceptions of it. They also uncovered barriers that had made it difficult for students like themselves to take classes at Fleisher.

Key findings included:

- Neighborhood residents were largely unaware of Fleisher.
- Fleisher's facility, a deconsecrated church, was imposing, intimidating, and ambiguous (see Figure 2). Those unfamiliar with the institution wouldn't be able to tell that there was an art school inside its walls.

Figure 2. Fleisher's Main Building

- The atmosphere inside of the facility wasn't inviting. Participants described it as conservative.
- Signs were only in English and classes were taught in English, sending a message to non-English-speaking people that Fleisher might not be for them.
- Economic barriers identified included the costs of supplies and child care.
- Other barriers cited were a lack of time (even many teens work several jobs), poor access to mass transit, and the difficulty of getting into popular classes.

COMPONENT #3: COMMUNITY LEADER INTERVIEWS

Five in-depth interviews were conducted with leaders of community organizations, including directors or program managers for SEPC member groups Fleisher had identified as representing constituencies that were less active in its on-site programs. The respondents were specifically selected for their firsthand knowledge of the targeted neighborhoods and their frequent contact with constituents. Topics discussed included opportunities for art making provided by other community organizations, perceptions of Fleisher, barriers to participation, and appropriate occasions and locations for Fleisher to engage with their constituencies.

Key findings included:
- The community organization leaders saw children as the most likely target group for Fleisher because children in immigrant homes tend to speak English and Fleisher offerings could fill an important need for safe after-school activities, particularly for children and teens whose parents work.
- The interviews produced similar themes on the barriers

to participation, with the lack of awareness of Fleisher seen as the hardest to overcome.
- The lack of non-English signage and programming not only was a practical barrier, but also contributed to a perception that non-English-speaking residents were unwelcome at Fleisher.
- Other barriers included the fact that many adults and teens lacked time because they held down multiple jobs; a desire to maintain cultural identity that conflicted with a belief that Fleisher was overwhelmingly focused on Eurocentric styles of art; and a perception of Fleisher as both physically and psychologically distant from their communities.

COMPONENT #4: NEIGHBORHOOD ETHNOGRAPHY

The final component was an ethnographic exploration of the neighborhoods of Southeast Philadelphia that combined participant observation and semi-structured interviews with neighborhood residents. The research was designed to identify how the different neighborhood groups related to each other, the role of art in residents' lives, and perceptions of Fleisher Art Memorial. Three two-person teams were created that included PhD candidates from local universities. The doctoral students had knowledge of the neighborhoods and the three ethnic groups whose communities had been growing in the targeted ZIP codes—Latin Americans, African Americans, and Southeast Asian Americans.

Team members worked individually and in pairs, visiting neighborhoods with high concentrations of the target groups. They observed local activities over a period of 150 hours in a variety of settings, including restaurants, streets, playgrounds,

barbershops, market stalls, community centers, and houses of worship. During that observation period, they also conducted more than 20 interviews, most of them impromptu, with neighborhood residents.

Key findings included:

- Art was valued, in large part, as a way to connect individuals to cultural communities and traditions, such as during festival preparations.
- Art making was often a group undertaking—in festivals, in religious centers, and on the street itself. In fact, these neighborhood residents tended not to see art as something one did on one's own, as it is practiced at Fleisher. Many residents informally participated in creating murals, graffiti, jewelry, and religious statues. They also performed various forms of music and dance, often related to their ethnic or cultural identity, such as salsa dancing, rap, Cambodian drumming, and Khmer classical dancing.
- Even among those to whom art was important, there was little awareness of Fleisher and its offerings. Those who were aware of it considered it to be for white, affluent, English-speaking people.
- The residents described the neighborhoods in Southeast Philadelphia as "tough," with safety concerns and some tensions among different ethnic groups. This tension between ethnicities could hamper Fleisher's efforts to bring various groups together for on-site activities.
- Consistent with comments made by community organization leaders, those who faced discrimination tended to be less open to people and institutions from outside of their own ethnic community.

The Fleisher staff supplemented the research effort with information from publicly available sources, including PolicyMap, an online data and mapping application that provides access to demographic statistics and data on other indicators, such as housing, income, and jobs,[9] and reports from the Brookings Institution on Philadelphia patterns of immigration and data specific to the various ethnic groups.[10] These publicly available sources allowed Fleisher to examine broader metropolitan trends and those specific to the targeted ZIP codes.

9. The PolicyMap database includes publicly available (census) data, which are free to access, as well as proprietary data. The database is searchable by various geographical units including address, block group, census tract, ZIP code, county, city, state, metropolitan area, school district, and political boundaries. Data are accessible in interactive maps, tables, charts, and reports. It is hosted by The Reinvestment Fund, a nonprofit community development financial institution, and can be accessed at www.policymap.com.

10. Those reports, and reports on other metropolitan areas, are available at www.brookings.edu.

BUILD IT AND THEY MAY NOT COME

The emerging picture was complex. There wasn't just one barrier or even two that could be addressed with new programs or practices. Instead, a range of barriers existed that included procedural, economic, cultural, linguistic, technological, and practical factors. There also wasn't one typical disinclined neighborhood resident, but rather multiple variations, based on different combinations of barriers, conspiring against participation. While programming or procedural changes might be able to address some of those barriers, a lack of familiarity with Fleisher and its activities would sharply limit the impact of any such reforms, even among residents who were interested in art. It was increasingly clear that the staff's first instinct—to create a suite of programs geared toward youth and their parents— would make only limited headway in bringing neighborhood residents on-site.

Gonzales summed up the key challenges this way:

We learned that there wasn't an awareness we could build on. We couldn't just expect to poster the area or send out flyers or mailers and then people were all of a sudden going to come … and we couldn't expect that people in those communities [would] even want to build that trust.

The community nonprofit leaders acknowledged the tough road that lay ahead of Fleisher, since even *they* found it difficult to maintain meaningful, ongoing engagement with their own constituents. In their view, the strategy Fleisher needed to pursue—and it could take years to accomplish it—had more to do with establishing a sustained presence in the daily lives of these neighborhoods and their residents than with creating new programming.

While Fleisher had carved out an institutional place on the SEPC and in the school system, it had yet to become a player in the day-to-day activities of the communities or a known entity among neighborhood residents. The leaders stressed that Fleisher first needed to build trust in and comfort with the organization by reaching out to initiate contact. Fleisher needed to be seen in the community at festivals and other venues, offering activities and support, to establish itself as a bona fide member of the neighborhood and a place where residents of those communities were welcome.

> **NEW PROGRAMMING, BY ITSELF, WOULD MAKE ONLY LIMITED HEADWAY IN BRINGING DISINCLINED NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS ON-SITE.**

A CHANGE IN DIRECTION: DEVELOPING A FOUNDATION OF GOODWILL AND RELATIONSHIPS

Based on the research, the originally proposed plans for on-site additions of a summer camp, family workshops, and an after-school arts program were shelved and a commitment to relationship building and neighborhood participation took their place. As Braun explains it,

> *Fleisher had been coming from a place of "We're here and we're great and people should come to us." But even if we said, "We'll offer it free," they would still get here and not see others from their community participating in a way that would make them feel welcome. … I think as a group we started to realize that we were setting ourselves up for failure. If we're going to do this, we have to invest the time and first develop relationships.*

The challenge was daunting, but there was a precedent: In 2007 the school had embarked on a project that would demonstrate that a more collaborative, relationship-based approach could connect communities to Fleisher. Called "Homemade," the yearlong project involved local professional artists working with area high school students to create art installations for the homes of leaders in local African American and Laotian communities, a Colombian family matriarch, and a multigenerational Vietnamese family. The installations were inspired by conversations among participating artists, students, and family members, and involved a collaborative process that brought together the histories, interests, and identities of host families, the artists, and the students. It culminated in a public exhibition at Fleisher Art Memorial's Center for Works on Paper.

Braun saw Homemade as the template for Fleisher moving forward because it had encouraged a deep and sustained level of involvement from groups that the organization felt it was not reaching on-site:

> *Here, we had proof that we could strengthen our ties with people in the neighborhood when we approached it as a team, developing trust, being good listeners, not imposing our will, and allowing the creativity to flourish in territory that was comfortable for the residents. That was going to be the welcome mat for Fleisher, [letting people] know about Fleisher in a way that they couldn't have learned if we just said, "Here's our course brochure. Please take something."*

With support from The Wallace Foundation to move in this new direction, including an additional $72,000 for expanded research and data collection, Fleisher changed the focus of its grant-funded work. Braun framed the new effort as a mission to build goodwill and enduring relationships in Southeast Philadelphia with the ultimate objective of increasing enrollment among neighborhood residents who reflected the economically disadvantaged and ethnically diverse character of Southeast Philadelphia. While no specific objectives or target percentages were set for particular ethnic groups, the goal was for one of

every three students to come from Fleisher's targeted Southeast Philadelphia neighborhoods. And the way to reach that goal: Fleisher would seize as many opportunities as it could to take part in the everyday activities of the rapidly growing ethnic communities in those ZIP codes and build and strengthen relationships with organizations that represented underserved groups and newly arrived populations.

The staff also looked for opportunities to develop art programs that could be implemented in community settings, as it had done with Homemade. If residents could feel comfortable working with Fleisher in projects off-site, Braun and the staff were convinced that eventually those good feelings would transfer to the school itself and make various communities feel welcome there. In its off-site programs to date, Fleisher had been hosted by other organizations, and it was not always clear to participants that these were Fleisher programs. The new initiative would be more deliberate and would also offer many more opportunities for residents to meet Fleisher. A timeline of key activities leading up to and following this change in direction appears in Appendix B.

1. RESEARCH TO REFINE THE APPROACH

With this new direction in mind, Fleisher set up a final round of four focus groups with a total of 27 participants in April 2010. These groups built on what Fleisher had already heard from community leaders and students. This final research phase was also used to explore ways Fleisher might better reach various communities, and how the Fleisher staff and facilities could provide a better welcome to community members.

Fleisher wanted the focus group participants to be adult residents of Southeast Philadelphia representing the growing ethnic and economically disadvantaged communities living in the surrounding neighborhoods. The staff also wanted neighborhood residents who hadn't been involved with Fleisher.

One focus group was conducted in English with Asian residents; one was conducted in Spanish with Latino residents; and two additional groups were conducted in English with a mixed ethnic and racial profile, including African Americans. No participants had taken classes at Fleisher as an adult (although one participant had as a child). Participants were recruited through the various social-service groups operating in the neighborhood (see sidebar, *Recruiting Hard-to-Reach Community Residents*).

The focus groups provided confirmation of and additional detail on the practical, social, and psychological barriers keeping new audiences from taking part in Fleisher's on-site programs, underlining once again their long work hours, lack of transportation, and language barriers. The lack of awareness in the neighborhoods about Fleisher and its offerings resurfaced as a barrier.

These groups also delved more deeply into Fleisher's image in the community, ranging from its relatively imposing edifice to residents' perception of institutional attitudes of exclusivity and aloofness that made them feel unwelcome. To participants in the focus groups, Fleisher seemed like a place for people with leisure time who wanted to pursue a Eurocentric approach to art making, and it therefore had limited relevance to the everyday lives, interests, and backgrounds of many community members who didn't share that heritage.

RECRUITING HARD-TO-REACH COMMUNITY RESIDENTS

Most focus group recruiting is done using a database or lists of an organization's key constituents. But Fleisher was intent on hearing from residents who had no prior connection to the institution and who would be less likely to have extensive relationships outside of their ethnic communities. As a result, they were also unlikely to be in any recruiter's database. So again, Fleisher was required to think "outside the box."

Fleisher decided to leverage its existing relationships with community organizations to reach specific cultural groups in Southeast Philadelphia to form the focus groups. In many cases, the nonprofits were partners Fleisher was already collaborating with in its Community Partnerships in the Arts program and the SEPC. Gonzales brought together contacts from three community organizations to serve as ad hoc recruiters and acted as a liaison between them and Fleisher's external research partner. The research firm provided expertise in recruiting and developed a tip sheet with procedures and recruiting guidelines (e.g., "Do not fill the groups with family and/or friends in the interest of obtaining diverse opinions"). The partner organizations recruited eight to 10 participants each from their own contact lists. The focus groups themselves were held at community centers rather than at a traditional focus group facility to help participants feel comfortable in a familiar setting.

This recruitment method was not without its problems, perhaps the biggest of which was confirming the attendance of all participants in advance of the focus group meetings. This step is necessary to ensure that groups have adequate numbers of participants, and became time-consuming because of the dispersed, informal method of recruitment. Nonetheless, the process worked: Fleisher staff described the members of the groups as engaged, interested, and opinionated.

The focus groups offered additional unexpected benefits. First, the recruitment strategy allowed Fleisher to deepen its working relationships with key staff at partner organizations, and often resulted in new points of contact. Second, the focus group moderator was able to inform participants about Fleisher's programs, tuition assistance, and registration process, enhancing the awareness of Fleisher among those participating in the groups. The moderator showed Fleisher's class brochure and registration form, and engaged respondents in a discussion about them. Finally, focus group attendees representing the Mexican and Indonesian communities offered to recruit community members on Fleisher's behalf and brought new visitors and families to Fleisher. This grassroots success provided a prototype for future programs aimed at relationship building, including formalizing a role for "FAMbassadors" (see page 64), neighborhood residents who work with Fleisher in a dual capacity as community liaisons and community informers.

2. COME TO US, SHOW US, WELCOME US

As residents discussed and explored ways that Fleisher could raise its profile in the neighborhood and build trust with residents, three themes emerged, that the research team's analysis summarized with the phrases "come to us," "show us," and "welcome us." These were themes that had emerged in Fleisher's other research and in discussions with leaders of community organizations, but now, Fleisher had them from the perspective of the very types of residents the school hoped to attract. (See sidebar, *In Their Own Words*.)

The phrases have become the basis for Fleisher's approach to relationship-building activities.

- Come to us: Fleisher needed to recognize that members of the ethnic and economically disadvantaged communities within the two ZIP codes wouldn't approach an institution that seemed elitist and Eurocentric. This reinforced the idea that the school had to make the first move by introducing itself in familiar community settings, such as ethnic and religious festivals and other events in public spaces. It also needed to dedicate some of its marketing to localized neighborhood publications and newspapers (such as the *South Philly Review*) or non-English-speaking newspapers to demonstrate Fleisher's commitment to engaging those neighborhood populations.

- Show us: Disinclined neighborhood residents needed clearer, more accessible information about what Fleisher is, what services or programs it provides, and how to access the offerings. Where words may fall flat, visuals and demonstrations of what the art looks like are apt to be more effective and provide a better context for what to expect in the classroom.

The course catalog presented additional hurdles. Class descriptions had technical terms (e.g., "silkscreen") unfamiliar to those with limited art experience and/or limited English, and scheduling information—critical for time-pressed prospective students—was not displayed in an intuitive way. Focus group participants reviewing the course catalog also pointed out that information about payment options and tuition-assistance availability should be more prominent.

- Welcome us: It's not enough to just attract neighborhood residents. To encourage repeat visits and ongoing participation, Fleisher needed to provide a friendly, accommodating, and respectful experience for visitors. It needed to acknowledge that many students do not speak English, to make an effort to support them, and to be patient in working through language barriers.

Embracing this three-pronged community-engagement strategy was nothing short of an organizational transformation for Fleisher. Even though the school had maintained relationships with community organizations for years, it always relegated those activities to a particular department or program. "It was valued for certain, but it was not an institution-wide process or priority," Gonzales explained. "Come to us, show us, welcome us" became a guiding framework for how the entire organization would become more inclusive.

> **"COME TO US, SHOW US, WELCOME US" BECAME A GUIDING FRAMEWORK FOR THE ORGANIZATION, AND EMBRACING IT WAS NOTHING SHORT OF AN ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION.**

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Fleisher's research partner, Slover Linett Audience Research, analyzed the focus group discussions with community residents and found three broad themes that had resonated with what Fleisher had heard in some of its other research projects.

■ Come to us: We can get to you, but we'll be more comfortable starting a relationship if you come to us.
- The residents said they felt intimidated by the institutional nature of Fleisher.
  ○ *Sometimes we might see the building and be afraid to go in there; we don't know if anyone will talk to us; we don't want to go. But if you come to us, that would give us more confidence to approach you.* (Female, Latino group)
  ○ *Even though [Fleisher] seems really close on the map, it's really worlds apart.* (Male, Mixed group)
- Fleisher staff must go out into the community to established gathering places and events and introduce themselves.
  ○ *Pass the word, go down to the community centers and do demonstrations and teach art and get them involved. Tell them about the multitude of programs that you have at Fleisher and have your name reverberate throughout the community.* (Male, Mixed group)

■ Show us: More than telling us about what you do, show us what Fleisher is all about.
- Because art is a visual medium, the most convincing appeals will show what Fleisher offers, e.g., visuals or demos.
  ○ *You obviously can't cover every single language that's out there, but visuals are really helpful. Even reading some of this, I don't really know what "Explorations in pointillism" is. We need to not just read it, but also see it.* (Female, Mixed group)
  ○ *Show the art. Because if I told her "silk-screening," she might not know what silk-screening is.* (Female, Mixed group)

■ Welcome us: We want to feel comfortable at Fleisher. In addition, the realities of our lives make it difficult for us to take part.
- Latinos and Asians explained how language barriers can also become psychological ones. Respondents didn't necessarily expect staff members to speak their language, but they said it was important for the staff's attitude to remain welcoming even when communication is difficult.
  ○ *Sometimes receptionists are friendly and they see that you're a little worried and they say, "Okay, don't worry, look ... " and they help you understand. But there are other receptionists who see that you don't speak English and [pretend] they don't see you and they don't help orient you.* (Female, Latino group)
  ○ *At the very least, speak in slow tones and in a way that would get them to understand, get them to know you care.* (Male, Mixed group)
- Language can also be a practical barrier that simply prohibits access.
  ○ *Even if they have a lot of questions, they just give up. If somebody just keeps talking English to them, they'll just hang up the phone.* (Female, Asian group)
- The cost of Fleisher classes is a barrier for many: Lower income and newly arrived neighborhood residents are focused on economic survival and cannot afford discretionary spending for art. Fleisher should highlight where assistance is available.
  ○ *[For] $45, I can do something better than coming to this. I could put food on the table for my children.* (Female, Mixed group)
- Many community members work non-traditional hours or multiple jobs, so flexible scheduling for classes would help them get access to Fleisher programming.
  ○ *My schedule is a mess. It's not every Tuesday I'm available in the morning. That's why I hesitate to take these classes. I don't have [a consistently available] time for it.* (Female, Asian group)

PREPARING THE INTERNAL CULTURE

Senior staff members believed the first step had to be an internal culture makeover. Fleisher would need to make sure everyone in the organization was prepared to welcome and work with the new groups of individuals now calling Southeast Philadelphia home. While the staff intellectually believed strongly in the mission to serve a broad community, the organization had gotten accustomed to working with a relatively homogenous population on-site that not only didn't reflect the demographics of Southeast Philly, but also tended to have greater knowledge of the kind of art instruction Fleisher offered. Complicating things further, some practices and processes that had developed at the school unintentionally made the organization difficult to access.

The staff first needed to understand that with some audiences in Fleisher's own backyard, it had not yet earned the kind of trust longtime program participants had in it. Fleisher would need to learn to accommodate a different kind of visitor, one who might not be familiar with Fleisher or the kind of art practiced there. Some neighborhood residents were likely to have limited experience with organizations from outside their own tight-knit communities, as well as limited English skills.

In fact, in any interaction involving Fleisher staff and residents from the surrounding neighborhoods, both parties might be nervous and uncomfortable with each other. The staff was used to dealing with English-speaking, upper-middle-class students who knew how to deal with organizational bureaucracy. As Martinez explains, "We're going to do all this work and when they get here, then what? I'm not sure that the staff was, at that point, ready to deal with people that they couldn't communicate with, from different socioeconomic backgrounds, who interact differently socially. That can be off-putting when we are used to a certain kind of person in the building who we may understand in a different way."

Fleisher got an early start on providing a more accommodating environment in the summer of 2008 by creating a new Visitor Services function. The front desk staff would provide a more welcoming front-line presence (see sidebar, *On-site Visitor Services*).

While Visitor Services presented the most immediate need, the entire staff would require training in how to make people new to Fleisher and those from different cultures feel welcome. Gonzales and Martinez designed a plan that raised awareness of the community engagement initiative, got the staff out of the building and into the neighborhoods, and developed the skills necessary to work with people from different cultural backgrounds. Specific objectives included:

- Building clarity and consensus among staff about the vision for community engagement, including goals, key steps, and how success would be defined
- Helping each staff member understand his or her role in Fleisher's overall community engagement work
- Providing helpful skills, resources, and tools for staff members to use in developing and designing programs and to improve Fleisher's community engagement capacity and effectiveness

ON-SITE VISITOR SERVICES

In the summer of 2008, Nicole Krom was hired as Visitor Services manager, a new position responsible for developing and managing strategies to make Fleisher more welcoming and easier to navigate for visitors of all backgrounds. The initial focus was on those who were unfamiliar with Fleisher or who faced language and other barriers. Among her central responsibilities were coordinating and training the staff at the front desk—the people whom visitors see first as they enter the Fleisher building, providing information and direction if needed, and whose responsibilities include answering phones and assisting with registration (in person, over the phone, or via the Internet).

The creation of a Visitor Services function reflected a change in how Fleisher saw its front-line presence. In the past, there was almost an assumption that those visiting Fleisher would need minimal assistance. As with many organizations, front desk staff were neither trained nor formally supervised. They were not necessarily prepared to assist people who didn't speak English well or who were uncertain about what to ask for. There also wasn't a point person to whom front desk staff could turn if an issue arose with a visitor. The function was treated informally, with staff from other departments providing coverage a few hours at a time.

In contrast, the new Visitor Services staff is well versed in Fleisher's activities and services, so they can start the process of informing visitors who are interested in finding out about the school. The staff now has had training in how to deal with people with limited English and help work through language barriers.

Krom came to Fleisher with a background in customer service and sought to staff the desk with paid employees (not volunteers) who matched the profile of those who tend to be successful in customer service—as she describes it, someone who is generally happy, but naturally so, not in a forced way. That's the hardest part, she says. "I hire for personality and train for skill. It's a tough job. The staff needs to know a lot. You have to know how everything works deeply within the organization." She looks for people who speak a second language, particularly Spanish, as well; she admits it is harder to find an English speaker who is also fluent in some of the many Asian languages prevalent in the neighborhood.

As the first point of contact with visitors, these staff members and their experiences are often sources of information for the entire organization. At weekly interdepartmental managers' meetings, they recount what Krom calls "lobby lessons," which aren't really lessons per se, but rather vignettes of actual exchanges with visitors, designed to give managers in other departments an understanding of who is coming into the building and what kind of assistance they require. These "lessons" often involve struggles to communicate when there is a language barrier and examine how those kinds of problems can make visitors feel and how personnel can work with visitors to overcome it.

To those ends, Fleisher developed a multiphase, comprehensive, but relatively low-cost training program that included sharing research findings, site visits to community partners' facilities, "cultural competency" training for understanding and working with diverse audiences, and a series of on-site workshops with facilitators from social-service agencies. All full-time staff members were required to participate in the training.

1. CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING

As a first step, the entire staff—from Visitor Services part-time employees to department managers and the executive director—attended cultural competency training provided by an outside firm specializing in teaching organizations about how to accommodate and welcome diverse cultures and perspectives. Seven training sessions took place over three days in June 2010, with four to five hours of training each day. The workshops addressed the following topics:

- An introduction to diversity awareness
- Defining diversity
- Self–awareness
- Healthy communication strategies
- Understanding race and why it matters
- Planning and application
- Worldview

The training was intended to raise Fleisher staff's consciousness about how ethnic culture and economic class impact perceptions and communication styles, and to provide skills that would enable them to better understand and communicate with people with a range of backgrounds. Much of the value laid in providing a forum for staff conversations about the community engagement work and the role staff would play in bringing it to fruition. The hope was these discussions would help staff become more invested in that work. Visitor Services Manager Nicole Krom recalled some staff resistance to the program because the sessions on how to understand the experiences of diverse races and how communication is affected by race were led by a middle-aged white man. But even with the staff criticism, she believed the three-day workshop had an impact:

> *It was good to really bring the staff together … maybe not for the same reasons that we actually were brought together, but just to have us talking about how we should be thinking. It was good at the moment to spur that kind of different awareness. … It made us stop thinking about what we always did every day in the same way that we always did it and say, "Okay, maybe I can think about this in a different way."*

2. STAFF ENGAGEMENT TRAINING

In early 2011, Fleisher began a 15-week training session as part of the community engagement initiative. The program included:

1. Introductory Brown-Bag Lunches. The staff was briefed on the full initiative over two brown-bag lunches in March 2011. Gonzales provided an overview of the research for staff members who had not seen it, and discussed emerging strategies for community engagement. Duplicate sessions were offered to accommodate different schedules, giving everyone on staff a chance to participate.

2. Community Engagement Workshops. A series of six two-hour interactive workshops followed in spring 2011 on

community engagement themes and topics. Each workshop included speakers from social-service agencies assisted by key Fleisher staff with relevant expertise. Topics included: relationship building, collaborations, and partnerships; agencies, organizations, and resources in Southeast Philadelphia; community arts strategies and programming for new audiences; developing metrics for community engagement programs and activities; communication and language strategies for working with English-language learners; and community engagement messaging and marketing.

3. Site Visits to Neighborhood Gathering Places. Although staff in some departments had long-standing relationships with several community organizations, many people who worked in the building had never visited Fleisher's community programs or been in contact with these partner organizations. Everyone—from facility staff to the executive director and members of the board—took part in at least three field visits to different organizations and gathering places in Southeast Philadelphia, including the following:

- The Italian Market area shops and vendors
- Cambodian Association of Greater Philadelphia, Mifflin Square Park, and Preah Buddha Rangsey Temple and Community Center
- Annunciation B.V.M. Hispanic Outreach Center
- Mt. Enon Baptist Church and Agogo Cultural Center (which celebrates African spiritual, artistic, and cultural traditions)
- United Communities Southeast Philadelphia, a settlement house agency focused on economic, social, and educational advancement for residents of Southeast Philadelphia

These visits were designed to serve multiple purposes. First, they allowed Fleisher staff to experience the everyday lives of individuals they hoped to serve—going beyond research findings to daily realities that can affect whether community residents are able to visit Fleisher. Martinez described how seeing people's lives firsthand broadened understanding, and even prompted change:

> *The research came back, and we could either just have those brown-bag lunches where everyone came and heard the results, and then what? Or, we could do these visits that would actually contextualize what they just heard about. So, if someone says, "I love art, but that's for my young people and for my elders, not for me," you have a context for them when you realize that we're visiting at 1:00 in the afternoon, but most of the moms that are there to greet us have to leave in two hours because their workday is starting at 3:00 when restaurants open.*

One insight: Fleisher's class scheduling hadn't been sensitive to the reality of non-traditional work schedules. In response, in 2011, Fleisher began offering a bilingual Spanish/English drawing class on Mondays to accommodate the fact that many of the Spanish-speaking residents in the neighborhood worked in service jobs in restaurants or entertainment venues that were closed on Mondays.

From a more personal perspective, their neighborhood hosts were extremely hospitable, according to Gonzales, leaving the staff wanting to return the favor and make these communities feel as comfortable at Fleisher

as the school's traditional audiences did. It brought to life an appreciation for the cultural richness of the surrounding community and how it was changing. As one example, board member Shirley Cook describes one of her visits to a Buddhist temple that had taken over a synagogue: "You'd look up and you'd see all the Jewish symbols, but you're in a Buddhist temple. It's an incredibly diverse community."

4. Briefings for Later Hires. Staff who joined Fleisher after the training sessions have been receiving briefings on the research findings, as well as Fleisher's relationship with different community organizations and programs that have developed as a part of the community engagement initiative (discussed in the section "Making Connections to the Community," beginning on page 52).

3. WORKING THROUGH STAFF RESISTANCE

Getting staff to embrace the community engagement initiative was made easier by the fact that so many of the employees had come to Fleisher in the first place because they were attracted to its mission. However, not everybody was totally on board. For some, there was general trepidation about the unknown—a vague concern that the limited English-language skills of this new audience and its lack of exposure to institutions like Fleisher and to the kind of art taught at Fleisher could negatively impact some programs. For example, some might require additional explanations or language support during class time, taking time away from instruction and boring other students. Martinez believed that to allay those concerns it was important to give them airtime and regard them without judgment, treating them as valid concerns among staff who all ultimately wanted the best for Fleisher.

Martinez recalled using that approach to work through opposition to the after-school "Teen Lounge" (described on page 53), which would provide a safe space for neighborhood youth to make art after school.

One person on staff was upset that we were going to have teens who weren't coming from our Saturday program. These were kids who could walk in off the street and just be here. And she kept saying, "these kids," "those kids." And you know, I couldn't have thanked her more, honestly, because there was tension all around that table, but she was honest enough to say, "Look, they're going to come in and mess up my building." And of course, everyone else who was very polite was horrified. I was relieved because we could then have a discussion about this. I said, "You're right. There's a chance that that's going to happen. So, what are we going to do so it doesn't happen? What do you need me to tell the monitor and the kids right up front so that they understand what our expectations are for the building and the way they need to leave the building?" It was great to have the conversation because now we can be proactive as opposed to [having] people say, "See, I told you that was going to happen." If [staff members are] hostile to the kids when they come in, [the kids are] more likely to act up.

4. BRINGING THE FACULTY ON BOARD

Having completed staff training, Fleisher began bringing faculty on board by raising awareness of the community engagement initiative. For many in the faculty, teaching students without any formal art training or who might not be

able to speak English well was a new experience, and Fleisher looked for ways to make it more satisfying for both students and instructors.

None of the 75 faculty members are full-time, and many of them have jobs teaching at universities or elsewhere. Because they also tend to be on-site at different times, it has been difficult to provide them with the same kind of structured and intensive orientation the full-time staff went through. The faculty was updated on the community engagement work, including the different program initiatives, at annual faculty meetings. But in general, this part of the initiative has proved more difficult logistically, and progress has been slow.

At least in its early days, the actual need to accommodate non-English-speaking students has turned out to be small enough for the staff to handle on a case-by-case basis, admittedly learning as they go. That approach has led Fleisher staff members to steer new students to classes led by the teachers who are most ready to accommodate them and where techniques can be demonstrated, making a detailed verbal explanation less necessary. Fleisher has been building its capacity to deal with greater needs in the future, although slowly to ensure that the organization can sustain the effort. It hopes to be able to meet it through either language-specific offerings or bilingual instructors. (See "Curriculum Changes," page 68.)

Like the staff, most instructors are drawn to Fleisher because of its social mission, and find the idea of serving a diverse constituency appealing. The majority of teaching artists have indicated their support for the community engagement initiative, and many have welcomed additional opportunities to teach in different venues as Fleisher continues to move out into the community. (See "Using Neighborhood Settings to Show What Fleisher Can Offer," on page 55.)

Martinez reported only limited pushback from a very small minority, but she admitted that there's only so much Fleisher can do if teachers aren't comfortable dealing with a language barrier or only want to work with students with certain artistic training or abilities. "All we can do is offer them support and tools for how to teach," she said.

What the senior management and board have tried to make clear to the entire staff is that this is the direction in which the institution is headed, and it is expected that those working there will join in the effort. "Ultimately, people will have to decide for themselves if this is still a place where they'd like to teach," Martinez said.

MAKING CONNECTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY

Ultimately, the most challenging element of the "come to us, show us, welcome us" approach was building awareness, trust, and a comfort level among neighborhood residents. Fleisher approached it from two directions: first, by amplifying relationships with community organizations serving underrepresented and newly arrived groups; and second, by designing programs to bring Fleisher activities out into the community to demonstrate both what goes on at Fleisher and its commitment to the neighborhood.

1. RELATIONSHIPS WITH ORGANIZATIONS

1. The Southeast Philadelphia Collaborative (SEPC). Fleisher had a head start on developing these relationships. Fleisher had been a founding member of the SEPC and had relationships with Collaborative members going back at least 10 years. Even before its community engagement research began, Fleisher already offered off-site programs through Collaborative members, running nearly 30 residencies after school.

Gonzales saw these SEPC relationships as pivotal to strengthening its neighborhood presence and involvement. The SEPC gave Fleisher access to organization leaders, who helped them identify and create opportunities to engage with their constituents. Most members who ran social-service operations on very tight budgets welcomed Fleisher's desire to serve the community. In the unique position of being the only arts organization in the group and among its better-funded members, Fleisher brought with it much-needed free services, such as after-school programming, and found opportunities to deploy those services in impactful and highly visible ways at neighborhood events.

Even before Fleisher embarked on its community engagement research, the arts organization established the Fleisher Teen Lounge, a relaxed drop-in place for teens ages 13 to 19. Here, youth who wanted to develop their creative abilities had the opportunity to work with artists and other teens interested in art. It was one of three teen lounges run by SEPC members. The commonality across all three lounges is that they are free drop-in centers providing a safe, productive place for teenagers to go after school. Beyond that, each has had a different focus.

The Fleisher Teen Lounge was created in 2008. Every Monday through Wednesday, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., 10 to 15 teens can work collaboratively with teaching artists and peers on visual arts projects in a variety of media ranging from clay, paint, and silk screen to stop-motion animation and darkroom photography. On Mondays, the program includes open studio time guided by the lounge coordinator. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, students can work on projects with visiting artists, who typically come for one two-hour session each week for three to five weeks. There are approximately 20 of these each year. The visiting artists are selected by the teens themselves through an RFP review process. Approximately 120 teens take part in the Teen Lounge each year.

2. Reaching Out to New Organizations. Gonzales and other Fleisher staff have looked to organizations outside the SEPC for support as well—although without that pre-existing network, connections were more difficult to make. Gonzales focused his attention on houses of worship simply because these were organizations that had established communities with which Fleisher could connect. "Anywhere that you see Spanish-language mass held or a Vietnamese service, or an Indonesian service, you know that they've reached, no pun intended, a critical mass in terms of following. You know they've got enough [people] to make it worthwhile to offer those language-based masses."

There were isolated success stories. When conducting its community research, Fleisher connected with a Buddhist temple and a Catholic church with a large Mexican following. Those efforts succeeded in bringing to Fleisher several new students who then spread the word to others in their communities. In general, however, enduring relationships with organizations outside of the SEPC were harder to build, primarily because most were unfamiliar with Fleisher and it was usually very difficult to make the initial contact. For instance, Gonzales would drop by only to find the rectory closed, or send e-mails to organizations that were not used to operating in that way. It was hard to create the same kinds of bonds that Fleisher had managed to create with nonprofits in the SEPC.

That said, as word of Fleisher's work expanded, other organizations began to reach out to it. For example, the Nationalities Service Center, a nonprofit organization that helps immigrants and refugees adjust to life in Philadelphia, approached Fleisher to help Nepali refugees settle into the neighborhood. As part of that effort, several Nepali youth have begun visiting the Fleisher Teen Lounge and taking Saturday art classes, and one of them went on to become a summer teen intern. What's more, many of their mothers have formed their own women's knitting group, which meets at Fleisher. They are making wearable crafts that they sell locally. The key for Fleisher was to determine services it could offer that aligned with its expertise and experience, and that staff members knew they could deliver and sustain.

2. USING NEIGHBORHOOD SETTINGS TO SHOW OFF WHAT FLEISHER CAN OFFER

Fleisher has begun to design and deploy a series of engagement programs to introduce itself to community members in neighborhood settings. These include activity programs offered in places where families gather and an expansion of its annual street fair to attract more Southeast Philadelphia partners and visitors. The primary purpose of these programs is to be an ongoing neighborhood presence, to "put Fleisher in front of people," in the words of Gonzales.[11]

1. A Focus on Youth and Their Families. Many of these programs involving art making are focused on youth or on youth and their families, in part because Fleisher had considerable experience working with those groups, and also because community members and community organization leaders in Fleisher's research expressed a desire

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11. The strategy of building new audiences by bringing the arts to natural gathering places has been used and validated as a viable strategy in a variety of art forms. See, for example, Chris Walker and Kay Sherwood, *Participation in Arts and Culture: The Importance of Community Venues* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2003). http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/audience-development-for-the-arts/strategies-for-expanding-audiences/Documents/The-Importance-of-Community-Venues.pdf.

for resources and opportunities for children. Youth also seemed to have fewer barriers to participating than adults did. They were more likely to speak English and appeared more open to exploring new kinds of organizations and activities in a country that for them was home. Working-age adults seemed less likely prospects. Even those who might be attracted to the idea of learning something new believed they would not be able to make time as they were working and/or raising a family. Any such activity would need to provide skills that would be instrumental in finding better employment if they were to consider it. Fleisher hopes to build programs targeting neighborhood adults in the future, but for the time being it sees youth as the most reachable neighborhood residents and gateways to the family.

2. Building Goodwill and Awareness through *ARTspiration!*, Fleisher's Street Festival. Fleisher has made a more concentrated effort to involve residents from surrounding neighborhoods in *ARTspiration!*, its annual free community arts festival featuring activities aimed at attracting youth and their families. Started in late spring 2007, *ARTspiration!* is a daylong event occupying the entire block in front of the Fleisher facility on Catharine Street, including the small Palumbo Park area adjacent to the art school. The festival has featured music and dance performances as well as approximately a dozen art-making workshops and activities in a variety of media, and arts and crafts booths that line the street with shorter-format activities such as face painting, food sculpturing, potato printmaking, button making, and sidewalk chalking. An information table near the entrance to *ARTspiration!* allows staff to see (and record) who attends. At the table, the organization also has offered an array of brochures on Fleisher programs and classes and small giveaways such as Fleisher-branded bookmarks and buttons.

For the 2009 *ARTspiration!*, Gonzales arranged for local performance groups representing diverse ethnic communities to provide entertainment throughout the day. Gonzales believed that if those groups came to perform, then they would draw others from the neighborhood to the festival. He identified these groups by reaching out to partner organizations in the SEPC and other community partners with whom Fleisher was working. The groups were compensated with modest stipends, ensuring that the benefits were mutual. Artists have included a teen break-dancing troupe, a family-based Mexican folk music ensemble, Cambodian classical dance performers, and local muralists who led Aztec hieroglyphic art-making activities in both Spanish and English. Gonzales also extended invitations to local businesses and organizations to host their own activities and booths, and invited Italian, Vietnamese, Latin American, and other food vendors from the surrounding neighborhood.

The strategy worked: Attendance at *ARTspiration!* was approximately 875 adults and children in 2009 (up from an estimated 500 in 2008), and the staff estimated that about 15 percent of those visitors came from the target neighborhoods (no formal data is available for these years).

Every year since, Fleisher has increased the number of local performers and food vendors not only by reaching out to its contacts with the SEPC and other organizations, but also by asking vendors from prior years to recommend other neighborhood vendors. The strategy has continued to draw more Southeast Philadelphia residents. As shown in Table 4, 696 adults and children visited in 2010. While that's fewer than in 2009, the percentage coming from

Southeast Philadelphia more than doubled, to 36 percent. Eighty-four percent were visiting *ARTspiration!* for the first time, including 51 percent who were first-time visitors to Fleisher.

In 2011, Fleisher ramped up its promotional efforts by:

- Increasing local electronic media (i.e., listing on Philadelphia online event calendars)
- Leaving flyers and postcards with local businesses, including bilingual flyers
- Posting flyers on telephone poles
- Spreading the word among SEPC and other community partners
- Inviting 40 percent more vendors (who also promoted the event)
- Providing welcome signs in four languages in addition to English: Cambodian, Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese
- Holding the closing reception for an exhibition of work created by students in its Community Partnerships in the Arts off-site residency program on the day of the

festival, thereby introducing Fleisher's facilities and on-site offerings to children and their families who typically experienced only Fleisher's off-site programs

The stepped-up efforts again paid off. As shown in Table 4, 2011 attendance was 1,609, with 66 percent of visitors coming from the target Southeast Philadelphia neighborhoods; 37 percent of these were first-time visitors to Fleisher. Fleisher followed the same formula in 2012 and 2013, with similar results. It hit a peak attendance of more than 1,900 in 2014 (although Fleisher did not collect detailed information that year about where visitors were from).

Figure 3. *ARTspiration!* Festival, 2012

Table 4. *ARTspiration!* Attendance

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Attendance:				
Adults	502	860	840	920
Children	194	749	743	825
% From Southeast Philadelphia (ZIP Codes 19147 and 19148)	36%	66%	55%	61%
% First-time visitor to *ARTspiration!*	84%	77%	61%	41%
% First visit to Fleisher Art Memorial	51%	37%	33%	28%
Vendors	65	91	70	85
Performers	24	37	92	43

Fleisher has kept the costs for *ARTspiration!* low by partnering with local businesses that provide in-kind donations to help defray the costs of art supplies, as well as supplying items to raffle and food and beverages for the event. Fleisher also has relied on between 50 and 75 volunteers (including some faculty volunteers) to help with the event, in addition to approximately 20 staff members.

Beyond attendance, the festival also has been raising neighborhood awareness of Fleisher and its programs. Cory Miller, former network and communications director for the SEPC, has considered *ARTspiration!* a key entry point to Fleisher programs for neighborhood youth, including its classes and Teen Lounge:

> *Every year a number of our youth are becoming more engaged with Fleisher [and] have found that entry point is through* ARTspiration!. *It's a free event; it's open to the public; it occurs on a Saturday afternoon. People are able to come and see neat performers, sample all these different vendors, try different types of art-making opportunities and activities. So for a lot of our youth, that's their key entry, where when they walk away they say, "Oh, how do I continue to work with Fleisher? Do they have classes? What are the options for me to stay involved?"*

3. Putting Fleisher Programming on Wheels. In 2011 Fleisher developed the ColorWheels van as a way of being present and active in the community on a more frequent and flexible basis. ColorWheels was designed as a mobile workshop that could meet children and families in public spaces, such as parks, or at events like community or religious festivals. For maximum visibility, the vehicle—a

Figure 4. ColorWheels Events in Southeast Philadelphia's Mifflin Square Park

2011 Ford Transit—was painted in vivid colors.[12] In the rear, the van has industrial racks that can carry equipment for printmaking, photography, drawing, painting, silk-screening, and more to any outdoor public space. In addition to art supplies, the van's interior holds two folding tables, four folding chairs, and Astroturf to provide outdoor flooring. A 10-foot-by-10-foot pop-up tent can be carried on the roof rack, allowing staff to set up a mini-workshop in any outside location.

12. The ColorWheels van was purchased and outfitted with a $30,000 grant from PNC Bank, which also provided an additional $35,000 for programming the van. Programming costs include teaching artist and assistant salaries, art-making supplies and equipment, fuel, and the printing of promotional materials.

ColorWheels made its first visits to the Cambodian New Year Festival and the Asian Pacific Association Festival after reaching out to festival organizers and identifying art-making opportunities appropriate for those events. It also ventured out to Mifflin Square Park, a popular gathering place for various ethnic communities from Southeast Philadelphia, in spring 2012.

In the 2013 fiscal year (June 30, 2012, to July 1, 2013), more than 1,000 community members took part in 27 events at public parks, cultural festivals, and neighborhood gatherings, and 1,364 participated in 26 events the following year. The number of participants has varied per event, largely depending on location. At festivals and parks, the Fleisher vehicle has been able to draw anywhere from 100 to 200 participants, while an event after school or at a recreation center may only serve 15 to 20 participants.

4. Artist Residence in a Neighborhood Park. While ColorWheels initially got Fleisher into the community at many events every year, the arts organization wanted to develop programs with a longer-term arc. Responding to a suggestion from community organization leaders, Fleisher decided to deploy the mobile ColorWheels studio on an ongoing basis in a multisession artist residency in Mifflin Square Park, a gathering place for residents of the various ethnic backgrounds in the surrounding neighborhoods. Despite a recent history of tension between different ethnic groups, the park has become part of a neighborhood revival and a place where disparate groups gather alongside each other, even if they don't necessarily mix freely—except, notably, when participating in Color-Wheels activities.

The first residency was held during four Saturday

COLORWHEELS EVENTS

ColorWheels lessons are designed to be family friendly and appealing to all ages, although the main targets—and the majority of those who are served—are children. By necessity, the lessons need to be flexible—staff members usually have some idea of who will be the likely participants from event planners, but they can never be certain who is going to approach the van at an event. They also often must teach groups that include varying degrees of experience, ages, and attention spans. They create a lesson plan in advance, but always retain the flexibility to adapt it to new and different kinds of participants on the fly.

Experienced Fleisher faculty members, including at least one artist and studio technician, staff ColorWheels events. The teachers are selected based on their past experience with community engagement, and they receive training on the goals and objectives of ColorWheels, as well as on protocol and procedures, before going out. Faculty members who have only taught at Fleisher on-site are required to first work as an assistant to get a feel for what it's like to work within the ColorWheels format. ColorWheels teachers create lesson plans, demo projects, and guides that outline the steps in completing the project on individual sheets of paper placed on display in multiple spots during each installation.

Information about Fleisher programming, registration, and tuition assistance is provided at each ColorWheels event. Fleisher's in-school teaching artists promote ColorWheels events to their students as a way to engage them outside of the classroom, with the hope that they will attend with their parents, siblings, and neighbors.

afternoons in the spring and early summer of 2012. Each event had a different teaching artist and was a standalone art-making project, included creating postcards from digital images students took on-site; frottage[13] using leaves and found objects; creating a coat of arms using paints, pastels, and digital media; and creating planter pots using stencils and fabric paints. On the four Saturdays, a total of 142 children, teens, and adults took part.

This artist residency allowed children who participated in Fleisher's school programs to continue the art-making experience with a Fleisher instructor and to bring their extended families and neighbors to Mifflin Square Park to participate as well. In this way, Fleisher also touches young people who are beyond the reach of its school programs. As with other ColorWheels events, Fleisher provided program information and registration on-site.

5. FAMbassadors. To increase Fleisher's visibility and reach in the community, Fleisher has recruited three Southeast Philadelphia residents to participate in a civic engagement program. Part community liaisons, part community advisors, these "FAMbassadors," as they are called, spread the word about Fleisher in formal settings like neighborhood organizations and among informal networks of friends and family. They have been active in bringing people to Fleisher and helping them understand the classes offered, as well as providing hands-on assistance with registration.

The idea for the FAMbassador program developed as a byproduct of Fleisher's community focus groups. After participating in the focus group, one woman from a neighborhood Latino church with which Fleisher was partnering enrolled in a ceramics class. After gaining a deeper

13. Frottage is the technique or process of taking a rubbing from an uneven surface to form the basis of an image.

understanding about Fleisher's programs, she subsequently recruited other non-English-speaking community members for Fleisher. She served as a liaison, helping neighborhood residents apply for classes and attend workshops. With her help, Fleisher enrolled seven first-time youth students in its summer program. Each of those students came with at least three other family members. As a result, awareness of Fleisher within the Mexican community grew significantly. The thought was: Why can't we find people like this woman in other communities?

The FAMbassador role was created as a paid part-time position, and two other FAMbassadors have joined since that time (including another with ties to the local Mexican community and one with ties to the local Cambodian community).

FAMbassadors were created to facilitate a two-way conversation—with neighborhood residents about Fleisher, and with Fleisher about community needs and opportunities. The FAMbassadors themselves have been actively engaged in the Southeast Philadelphia community and advise Fleisher staff of partnership opportunities with community groups and about upcoming neighborhood events. Fleisher also is using their feedback to develop workshops rooted in culturally specific art forms and celebrations. For example, one FAMbassador who is a member of the local Mexican community helped organize a Day of the Dead celebration that turned into an on-site residency for a local artist and a four-day celebration around the altar he created. Among the on-site craft workshops offered to neighborhood families were ones on making masks, sugar skulls, and paper *cempazuchitl* (marigold) flowers.

SOME EARLY ON-SITE CHANGES

While most of the focus for Fleisher has been on building bridges to the communities, the staff also has modified procedures and programs on-site to become more accessible to newcomers, particularly those from the targeted neighborhoods. Most of the tweaks have been in the way information is communicated, more detailed descriptions of tuition assistance, and some expansion of course offerings.

1. REVISING COMMUNICATIONS

As a first step to making Fleisher's on-site offerings easier to understand, staff members redesigned the course catalog, which focus groups described as too text-heavy for recent immigrants with more limited English vocabularies. It also included too many technical terms that were hard to understand for those with limited exposure to the kinds of art that Fleisher teaches. Looking originally like a college catalog, it was reconfigured into a one-page unfolding document.

This new guide organizes offerings by day of the week, a factor that often determines which class an individual takes. It also includes a grid of course offerings that provides at-a-glance information on the time, date, and title of the class and whether the course is tuition-free or fee-based. As a side benefit, staff found that current constituents also welcome the changes because they too are schedule-driven when selecting.

The course guide also indicates whether the instructor speaks Spanish. The guide itself is still available only in English, but translating it into Spanish and other languages is planned for the future—a goal that has been made easier and less expensive by the new brochure's reduced amount of text.

Fleisher has said its next step is to modify marketing communications to better reach the various communities. Working with a consulting firm, staff have outlined a comprehensive action plan to review the content and visuals of Fleisher's printed and online communications and developed strategies for better engaging each distinct group of residents, including non-English speakers and English-language learners.

Fleisher also hasn't tapped into neighborhood publications on a regular basis; the advertising budget has remained minimal, allowing only limited paid advertising directly in Southeast Philadelphia. Fleisher staff members have said they believe it is more important to raise awareness through its relationships with community groups and by participating in community life. Fleisher has received some free publicity via articles on ColorWheels, Teen Lounge, and other activities in the past few years in *South Philly Review*, a weekly free newspaper that serves southern Philadelphia.

2. TUITION ASSISTANCE

Without necessarily targeting specific neighborhoods, one of Fleisher's first priorities was to find ways to ensure that those who wanted to come to Fleisher would not be prevented from doing so because of a lack of funds. Typically, around 30 percent of Fleisher's classes are free, requiring only the cost of supplies (about $20 to $40 per class) and lab or model fees ($5 to $45 per class). Even the costs for tuition-bearing classes haven't exceeded $220 in most cases (plus materials and/or lab fees).

Still, many economically disadvantaged families have not been able to afford making such an outlay on a non-essential item like a Fleisher course. Tuition assistance has been particularly important during the summer, when no free classes are offered.

To meet those needs, Fleisher developed a program that would allow it to fund students throughout the year. The availability of funds is tied to income for the term: Once the organization reached a specific revenue target for a term, then those asking for tuition assistance could receive it. If the school fails to hit that revenue target, then for every 10 full-tuition-paying students, one student is allowed in tuition-free. In recent years, nearly all those in child and teen programs who have applied for tuition assistance have received it, as have between 80 and 90 percent of adults who have applied.

Students apply for tuition assistance when they register. There are no set guidelines for how many can receive the help; the form does not ask students to indicate their income, but simply to indicate why they are asking for tuition assistance and how much they can afford to pay. Even so, most people have been contributing something toward the cost of their classes. And even if they get full assistance, they still are responsible for the costs of supplies and lab and model fees, where applicable.

3. CURRICULUM CHANGES

Fleisher has been much slower to introduce changes to the on-site class and workshop curriculum that aim to attract the various ethnic groups. Adding new course offerings would require finding teachers capable of leading the new areas of instruction and ensuring sufficient enrollment to support the new curriculum. Thus, Fleisher has decided to take it slow, introducing courses only once it can offer high-level instruction on a sustained basis. Moreover, Gonzales suggested that to offer classes with only particular demographic segments in mind might be missing the point; Fleisher is at its best when it brings groups together, rather than segregating groups in their own lessons or cultures, he noted.

For years, Fleisher has offered Cambodian dance classes, as well as courses in Cambodian mask making and weaving with Cambodian-born artists who work in Philadelphia. These classes have appealed to a broad cross-section of Fleisher students, not only those of Cambodian descent. Fleisher senior staff have said there are multiple benefits to these kinds of programs: They not only demonstrate the importance Fleisher attributes to these cultures, but also broaden the offerings available to all Fleisher students. On a deeper level, Gonzales suggested that introducing art forms seen in other cultures might reduce the "psychological, perceptual, and geographic distance between Fleisher and its Southeast Philadelphia neighbors."

Although some of the staff raised the possibility of adding several more classes like these, the decision was made to wait and respond instead to opportunities as they present themselves. For instance, Fleisher has recently added new faculty to teach Nigerian and Ghanaian pottery on a regular basis. Gonzales noted that the newer offering was the offspring of a 2011 artist residency that had "mainstream, broad appeal, but also very specifically linked to the heritage of the African American community in Southeast Philadelphia."

As another example, Fleisher recently introduced Dibujo Básico (Basic Drawing), an introductory drawing course specifically intended for Spanish-speaking students—its first bilingual offering. Now in its fourth year, that class is at full enrollment (as are the ongoing classes in Nigerian pottery and Ghanaian pottery).

The one other curriculum change the staff has considered is adding more vocational arts instruction, such as courses in digital media. Some focus group participants mentioned that vocational offerings might attract economically disadvantaged people because they would enhance career choices. For now, that idea is still under consideration.

Although the mix of on-site curricula has been slow to reflect the range of ethnicities in the neighborhood, the arts organization has taken what Gonzales calls a more "culturally informed" approach in many of Fleisher's artist residencies with neighborhood groups, choosing projects that reflect the culture of the group with which they are working. For example, Fleisher recently had an artist residency at the Cambodian Association of Greater Philadelphia, where young students explored the themes and cultural significance of Cambodian New Year celebrations and created an installation that was presented at the Cambodian New Year Festival in Southeast Philadelphia. Gonzales sees these kinds of residencies as important in both raising awareness of Fleisher as an organization that does good things with young people and expressing Fleisher's respect for the festival and the Cambodian culture. Finding projects like these has been based on opportunities uncovered with community partners and can be easily built into the Fleisher schedule. Fleisher has also started to conduct these projects on-site with greater frequency, such as its recent Day of the Dead celebration. (See page 65.)

RESULTS: THE COMMUNITY RESPONDS

With programs finally taking hold, the community engagement initiative has begun to gain traction. Staff members have recognized that they are at the beginning of a long process; neighborhood comfort with the organization won't be built overnight, or even over a period of a few years. Successful initiatives to diversify audiences typically require a period of several years, even decades (see "Change Comes Slowly," on page 76). The success of *ARTspiration!* in attracting increasing numbers of community residents and businesses has been a positive indicator, as are the large number of residents who have experienced Fleisher through ColorWheels. Fleisher's key objective, however, has remained having the on-site programs reflect the diversity of the community. It won't be enough to continue to serve people off-site in different ways, and the staff has been encouraged by slow movement upward in class enrollments by neighborhood youth.

Just as important as seeing changes in the enrollment composition—and a necessary first step to achieving that—has been the increased acceptance of Fleisher as both a neighborhood institution and an organization eager to serve all those who are interested in art, whether or not they speak English, whether or not they are well-off, and whether or not they know something about art. Indeed, Fleisher has scored some of its most impressive gains in changing perceptions.

1. CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF FLEISHER

In 2012, to develop a finer understanding of who was visiting Fleisher and what they thought of it, the organization conducted an additional wave of its visitor tracking survey. The survey was distributed by staff, faculty and volunteers, and was completed by 509 people who visited during the summer semester and 366 people visiting during the fall term.

Changing the way people think about an organization has been identified as the most critical step in attracting more diverse audiences, according to a 2001 RAND Corporation study that is considered one of the most comprehensive evidence-based frameworks for audience building.[14]

Evidence from the 2012 visitor survey suggested that Fleisher has been making headway on changing the neighborhood's previous assessment of the school as elitist and Eurocentric. The survey also revealed a shift away from the negative appraisal of Fleisher as unwelcoming to local residents who didn't speak English, were without the money to pay for courses, or represented certain ethnic groups. Table 5 shows visitor perceptions of the extent to which Fleisher cares about serving a variety of constituent groups. Fleisher made impressive gains between 2009 and 2012, particularly when respondents were asked whether it cared about serving teens, residents of South Philly, and people who don't speak English.

Although there's still considerable room for improvement, the extent of these changes has been encouraging. The data were only indicative of those starting to visit the school; Fleisher also needed to change perceptions among neighborhood residents

14. Kevin F. McCarthy and Kimberly Jinnett, *A New Framework for Building Participation in the Arts* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., 2001), http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/audience-development-for-the-arts/key-research/Documents/New-Framework-for-Building-Participation-in-the-Arts.pdf, 32.

Table 5. Perceptions of Constituents Fleisher Is Concerned About Serving

	2009 n=558–788	2012 n=694–965	Gain since 2009
In your opinion, how much does Fleisher care about serving the following?			
Children	75%	85%	+10%
People just getting started in art	76%	85%	+9%
Teens	67%	82%	+15%
People who know a lot about art	59%	73%	+14%
South Philly residents	56%	72%	+16%
People who are unemployed or don't have much money	52%	59%	+7%
People who express creativity with crafts, etc.	52%	58%	+6%
People whose cultural heritage is from someplace other than the U.S.	36%	49%	+13%
People who don't speak English well	26%	41%	+15%

who were not yet coming through the door. Fleisher staff members recognize these challenges and believe that, over time, by maintaining a consistent presence in the community—one that demonstrates their commitment and exposes residents to Fleisher across multiple occasions—they can continue to move these perceptions.

Importantly, perceptions of Fleisher as more inclusive have not come at the expense of longtime supporters. Satisfaction with the institution among active students has remained high. According to the 2012 visitor survey, 94 percent rated classes for children as good or very good, while 90 percent described classes for teens and 88 percent regarded classes for adults as good or very good. (These were higher than the 2009 survey, when the "good or very good" responses were 89 percent, 82 percent, and 86 percent, respectively.)

2. CLASS ENROLLMENT

Enrollments among residents in the target 19147 and 19148 ZIP codes have begun to increase, with particularly notable growth among children and youth. Table 6 shows the total number of students enrolled in Fleisher classes and workshops on-site, and among those, the number and percentage that come from the surrounding target neighborhoods.

At the beginning of the engagement initiative, 20 percent of students came from the surrounding neighborhood; that number has slowly increased to 24 percent. While the absolute number of adults from the surrounding neighborhood taking classes and workshops has grown, as a percentage of the total it has remained flat. On the other hand, target-neighborhood youth enrollment, where Fleisher placed its emphasis, has increased in both number and as a percentage of the total of on-site school-age participants in classes and workshops, moving from 25 percent to 36 percent.

Table 6. Total Enrollment and Enrollment from Southeast Philadelphia (ZIP Codes 19147 and 19148)

	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012
Total class and workshop students	3,976	4,553	4,875	4,816
Total from Southeast Philadelphia	791	897	1102	1161
Percent total from Southeast Philadelphia	20%	20%	23%	24%
Adults in classes and workshops	2,519	3,077	3,372	3,234
Adults from Southeast Philadelphia	428	446	556	596
Percent adults from Southeast Philadelphia	17%	14%	16%	18%
Youth in classes and workshops	1,457	1,476	1,503	1,582
Youth from Southeast Philadelphia	363	451	546	565
Percent youth from Southeast Philadelphia	25%	31%	36%	36%

Table 7 shows the share of visitors from the target ZIP codes that fell into certain racial and ethnic groupings (self-categorized). In both surveys, the percentage of white visitors from the target ZIP codes exceeded the percentage reported in the 2010 census of the target ZIP codes. Slightly higher percentages of visitors identified as Hispanic or Latino and black or African American, but these increases weren't statistically significant. Asian visitors from the target ZIP codes, by contrast, fell from 12 percent to 6 percent—a drop the school's staff couldn't explain.

To provide additional context, Table 8 displays demographics of the total Fleisher visitor base compared to the demographic percentages from the 2010 Philadelphia metropolitan area census. Here, as in Table 7's look at the target ZIP codes, the percentage of white Fleisher visitors exceeded the percentage of white residents in the metro area. The percentages of visitors who identified as Asian, Hispanic or Latino, and black or African American were statistically unchanged between 2009 and 2012 (that is, the minor fluctuations were too small to be called statistically significant). The latter two groups continued to fall short of their proportion in the total metro area population.

Table 7. Demographics of Visitors in ZIP Codes 19147 and 19148

	2010 Census	2009	2012
		n=217	n=196
White	63%	76%	77%
Asian	15%	12%	6%
Black or African American	9%	2%	5%
Hispanic or Latino	11%	3%	6%
Two or more races	2%	3%	4%
Other (including American Indian, Alaska Native, Hawaii Native, other Pacific Islander)	<1%	3%	3%

Table 8. Race/Ethnicity of Fleisher Art Memorial Visitors from the Philadelphia Area

	2009 *n*=976	2012 n=801	Philadelphia Area 2010*
White	72%	72%	65%
Asian non-Hispanic	7%	5%	5%
Black or African American non-Hispanic	7%	9%	20%
Hispanic or Latino	4%	4%	8%
Two or more races	6%	6%	2%
Other (including American Indian, Alaska Native, Hawaii Native,other Pacific Islander)	4%	4%	<1%

* The population of the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes an area within approximately a 30- to 40-mile radius of Philadelphia. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

3. CHANGE COMES SLOWLY

Even as more people were coming from Southeast Philadelphia, on-site programs were still drawing a similar mix of races and ethnicities in 2012 as they were in 2009. The percentages of Latino and African American visitors from the target ZIP codes have remained pretty much unchanged. The percentage of Asians declined between 2009 and 2012. Fleisher staff members have chosen not to focus on those individual numbers—at least for the time being, although they maintain that bringing those groups on-site is a nonnegotiable objective.

The staff believe, in line with proven practices,[15] that building goodwill and relationships is a long process that is not going to provide an immediate lift in attendance data. They have been encouraged by numbers that show perceptions of Fleisher changing and by the fact that more Southeast Philadelphia

residents, albeit not necessarily from the underrepresented ethnic groups, have started to enroll in classes on-site.

It may be the case that the strategy of targeting neighborhoods in the way Fleisher has, as opposed to strategies targeting a specific group or groups such as the Mexican community, won't produce the demographic diversification reflective of the targeted neighborhoods. Staff members continue to believe that a relationship-based approach with neighborhood groups that serve diverse constituencies, while slow, will ultimately produce more enduring change that will keep pace with ongoing shifts in neighborhood demographics.

If similar initiatives to build community engagement are any indication, it could take a decade to see a demographic shift in the visitor base. In *Invitation to the Party*, author and audience diversification expert Donna Walker-Kuhne noted that one of the greatest lessons she learned about engaging new audiences is that the effort must be *sustained* over several years. After extensive work building community relationships for the Public Theater in New York City, she concluded that "[the team] only started to really experience the fruits of our labor 10 years later. People are now coming back to the theatre *on their own*, spontaneously, without the groups that first brought them to our front door."[16]

Similarly, when the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego set out to engage the surrounding Latino audience in San Diego and nearby Tijuana with a multifaceted strategy, including efforts based on art collection choices, language, and community partnerships and relationships, it took 10 years to see significant, measurable results.[17] The wherewithal and

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

16. Walker-Kuhne (2005), 91, emphasis in original.

17. Fotis Kapetopoulos, *Adjust Your View: Developing Multicultural Audiences for the Arts* (Surrey Hills, NSW, Australia: Australia Council for the Arts, 2009), 58.

required patience may be too much for some organizations, which might be tempted to admit defeat early or otherwise find it difficult to keep the faith.

Fleisher staff members admit being somewhat surprised by the slow pace of progress in attracting neighborhood residents to Fleisher's on-site offerings, but they have come to understand that building the hoped-for avenues takes time. As Gonzales put it, "I got over the disappointment that it wasn't going to happen overnight, which took at least a year. I think in 10 years, you'll see a greater, for lack of a better word, integration, or mixing, here." Given the long timespan, he expects there will always be a need for Fleisher to do off-site work and bring arts education to the neighborhoods if it wants to maintain a high profile.

In addition to the movement in some of the attendance data, Gonzales mentions what he sees as a sign that the comfort level of those coming to Fleisher is increasing and routines around its activities are developing. "If you come here on a Saturday, you'll see a small group of mothers in the park next door and they've got toddlers, the ones who aren't old enough [to take classes]," he says. "They're all together while their older kids are taking classes. … To me that's a very real indicator of moving in the right direction. I see a real level of a change in their body language. You can just see they're much more at ease and comfortable. And this is routine for them now." Fleisher staff members routinely share these kinds of anecdotes with each other as a way to build enthusiasm for the initiative.

KEYS TO FLEISHER'S SUCCESS

While Fleisher cannot yet declare victory, it's seeing encouraging signs, with community perceptions and numbers moving in the right direction. These gains are hopefully harbingers of larger shifts to come, and are important achievements in themselves.

1. EMBRACING SAMUEL FLEISHER'S MISSION

The original Fleisher mission and the passion with which most of the staff and board regard it made the task of reorienting the organization easier. While the art school was initially challenged by the changing demographics of the surrounding neighborhoods, its underlying mission provided the impetus for setting goals to overcome that challenge. The work then became a matter of aligning resources toward reaching those goals. Braun explains:

Fleisher has always been committed to the vision of Sam Fleisher. That's what certainly attracted me here. It was just getting the watch gears in place so that they were all ticking in tune with one another to make this place really sing in a way that the founder had envisioned … not just programmatically, but in terms of the way that all of our employees behaved and expected to behave to support the core values of the organization.

Board members also were able to embrace the community engagement initiative because of its close alignment with Fleisher's original mission. In fact, the community engagement initiative became part of Fleisher's organizational identity, rather than an add-on or one-time undertaking. Said board member Shirley Cook, "From my perspective, there was never a [board] discussion of 'Do you buy into it?' because it reflected what Fleisher is [about]. And if you sit on the board at Fleisher, if you work at Fleisher, if you have anything to do with Fleisher, well, this is it. This represents the entity. So there wasn't anything to buy into. It's who we are."

2. CHANGING INSIDE FIRST

The engagement effort required Fleisher to relate to audiences in a new way, staff members believed. Being able to make new audiences feel welcome became just as important as programs to attract new audiences; community engagement went from being the work of a few departments to the responsibility of the entire organization. That shift required getting the entire staff on board, and, in the end, equipping them with skills, tools, and competencies to work with a new audience and in new ways. Staff saw this organizational realignment as essential. As Martinez noted, they could not expect people outside their organization to change their behavior toward Fleisher without first considering if they themselves needed to do things differently.

The staff became focused on the initiative via a series of workshops, exercises, site visits, and training that over time led them to see their work through the lens of community engagement and to judge their own effectiveness in terms of meeting its objectives. Building this kind of internal alignment not only

consumes resources, but also pushes out timelines—timelines that were already made longer by audience research. However, it has the potential to deliver a multitude of benefits that help give initiatives staying power. Most important, having a unified vision of an initiative clarifies its importance, builds buy-in for it, and helps work through points of resistance, in addition to giving staff the tools and messages to carry it out.

3. BECOMING A PARTNER IN THE COMMUNITY

More than merely a program or initiative, Fleisher has focused every part of the organization on engaging the community—creating a culture in which Fleisher doesn't simply visit the surrounding neighborhoods, but is an active and enthusiastic part of it. Staff members now see community engagement as more than a mere initiative; they believe that Fleisher's ability to fulfill its mission virtually hinges on it. As Martinez said, "We don't call it *outreach* [anymore] when we talk about it. *Outreach* always sounds temporary. It is not part of an institution; it's something added onto an institution." Community engagement is now automatically considered an essential element in every activity the institution pursues, Martinez said.

> **"WE DON'T CALL IT *OUTREACH*. *OUTREACH* SOUNDS TEMPORARY. IT IS NOT PART OF AN INSTITUTION; IT'S SOMETHING ADDED ONTO AN INSTITUTION."**

Fleisher always had a history of being "community friendly," a result of its work in off-site programs in schools and community centers, according to Francis Carney, executive director of United Communities Southeast Philadelphia. Today, Fleisher

is perceived of as an active member of the community, Carney explained, thanks to its community engagement activity.

Fleisher has allowed itself to be engaged by the neighborhoods, participating in their festivals and organizations as a proactive and responsive partner, meeting residents in the places where they feel comfortable, and becoming a part of neighborhood life. As former network and communications director for the SEPC Cory Miller noted, Fleisher goes where it can be of most assistance in the community. In discussing how Fleisher differs from other organizations, she explained:

> *It is reflected in whom they choose as their partners. When they were launching ColorWheels, choosing Mifflin Square Park, they chose a challenging spot. The majority of these youth do not speak English. The majority are refugee community members who are from Burma, Nepal, or Bhutan, and they're coming into a surrounding that's definitely a lot more challenging than if they picked a different park in a different area of South Philly, or even Philly in general. … They're choosing to partner with migrant education. They're choosing to partner with the Cambodian Association and really get down with the populations that are going to get the most out of the services, and who really do need to have them met where they are, because they don't necessarily have the means to go to Fleisher or pay for tuition-based arts opportunities.*

Fleisher's existing relationships, particularly those developed as part of the SEPC, gave it a head start. It was, as Martinez put it, "a bank with trust and goodwill in capital."

4. BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

There are multiple ways to go about building audiences, but practitioners with successful track records in diversification focus on building relationships, just as Fleisher has. Walker-Kuhne, in her book, defined audience development as the cultivation and growth of long-term relationships that require "making contacts, going into the communities you are trying to reach, engaging them in dialogue or activities related to the arts and your institution's activities, forming partnerships, and creating doors where none existed before."[18] This kind of work requires a long-term commitment, persistence, and reliable follow-through.

Fleisher certainly benefitted from having a dedicated staff person (Gonzales), who had both the time and the experience to make inroads into new communities. But ultimately it has been and will be the day-to-day interactions that build trust and strengthen relationships among all levels of Fleisher staff and members of the various communities.

One hallmark of Fleisher's work with other organizations is responsiveness to its partners' needs and circumstances even as it meets its own requirements, Gonzales said. "We need to be very respectful of how we work with our partners and understand that it's a give and take," said Gonzales. "[Fleisher] can't use a model where it simply drops arts resources into these communities of need. It needs to be an approach that works within their existing structures." All potential partners have their own constraints—economic and cultural—and the process of fruitful collaboration can only be achieved if Fleisher comes up with solutions that meet its own goals while making sure programs are sustainable for its partners. "A program can't be a drain on

18. Walker-Kuhne (2005), 12.

their resources," Gonzales stated. "We can't develop programs that are going to be so taxing on them that they're not going to be able to deliver over the long haul. They need to be manageable."

Carney from the United Communities Southeast Philadelphia said he considers one of Fleisher's greatest skills to be its capacity to listen to partners, and in doing so, to accommodate their realities: "Fleisher hires staff that are willing to listen to the community. Maybe that just sounds too simple, but I think that there is something to that. Magda [Martinez] and I didn't always agree about things, but I know that she listens to what I have to say." He sees a willingness to have dialogue across all levels of the staff, which is what makes Fleisher so effective.

As one example, Carney recalled an incident that for many organizations might have ended a partnership. It involved resident artists being sent to a community off-site and having a negative experience because the youngest children had a hard time settling down.

Lots of people wanted to take advantage of Fleisher's resident artists, but it was a very limited resource … so I think it would have been easy for them to say, "Okay, let's move on to where it's easier." … [Instead, Fleisher came back with] "Okay, it's not working the way that we thought it would, but we still want kids to have this experience." And that's the message that I think was critical. They didn't walk away. But they weren't opposed to saying, "Francis, we as a group need to address this … and if you do, here is where we'll be willing to meet halfway."

5. FLEISHER MUST BE FLEISHER—WHETHER ON-SITE OR OFF-SITE

At Fleisher, relationship building isn't the responsibility of one dedicated staff member—it is the work of everyone because the experience that neighborhood residents take away from a ColorWheels activity or from Fleisher interactions with community groups needs to match what they experience when they walk through Fleisher's doors. No doubt, there have been some missteps. In the summer of 2009, for example, when Fleisher made its first large-scale attempt to engage neighborhood residents in the *ARTspiration!* festival, it created Spanish-language advertisements and distributed them in neighborhoods with large Latino populations. On the program were performances by a Mexican folk dance troupe and art making based on the Mayan and Aztec zodiac calendars, led by a Spanish-speaking artist. But many of the families who came to *ARTspiration!* were dismayed to find there was no Spanish-language support at information booths or on directional signage, making it difficult for them to enjoy the entire festival. That was rectified in subsequent years.

In a similar incident, Fleisher attempted to partner with the Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Associations Coalition (SEAMAAC), working with a group of approximately 60 community elders, to introduce art instruction into the social activities of the group. After conducting an information session with the group, Gonzales led a tour of Fleisher, giving members a chance to experience the organization and familiarize themselves with the space. Not long after, a family associated with SEAMAAC arrived at Fleisher to register children for a summer class but found the registration form overly complicated and themselves unprepared to supply all of the information required.

This bureaucratic roadblock was a mismatch with the warm invitation and introduction that the group had received earlier. In response, Fleisher streamlined the registration process and has become increasingly sensitive to the extent to which the entire experience at Fleisher—not just the "welcome"—is a hospitable one.

6. PROVIDING MULTIPLE POINTS OF ENTRY

In describing her successful track record in audience development, Walker-Kuhne stated that audience development can be thought of as "creating doors where none had existed before," opportunities to engage in new ways that neutralize perceptual barriers or alleviate practical ones.[19] She referred to these as "points of entry" that allow audiences to experience the work. Fleisher worked to provide a variety of these potential pathways for community members—each requiring different commitments and involvement. If one approach doesn't reach them, the other might. As the SEPC's Miller put it, "We were really excited to see ColorWheels because it provides a soft approach that's different than the Teen Lounge or the art residency that was a six- or eight-week time commitment."

Fleisher continued to offer its regular course curriculum, with its range of workshops and the bulk of its classes lasting 10 weeks. The hope has been that eventually people who are newer to Fleisher will try some of these options after they or their children have sampled the organization through Color-Wheels, Teen Lounge, or an artist residency program. Staff members haven't been naïve; they recognized that newcomers are not going to immediately feel a sense of comfort after just one exposure—especially considering that they are trying to

19. Walker-Kuhne (2005), 12.

reach many individuals who are new to the United States and for whom its organizations are unfamiliar. For that reason, staff members have felt it necessary to provide multiple opportunities on a continual basis.

7. A DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH

Of course, meeting the community on terms it is comfortable with requires an awareness of what those terms are. Fleisher resisted the temptation to develop and deploy programs immediately. Instead, the staff used a combination of research and dialogue with community organization leaders to understand how it could integrate Fleisher's art into the lives of neighborhood residents.

As a first step, they examined how the neighborhood was changing around them. Examining those research findings alongside census and other demographic data has given Fleisher staff a deeper understanding of the surrounding areas and changes they are undergoing. As Braun stated: "Being able to collect the data on who's coming now, and compare that to the neighborhood demographic data that we were beginning to collect through PolicyMap … we were really able to start to get a feel for how the neighborhoods around us were growing and changing … that was like the biggest tool in our toolbox." Board member Shirley Cook explained that it gave clarity to the challenge that lay ahead: "The biggest thing that this work gave us is the opportunity to go out and find out who the community is … and really pinpoint how the community has changed."

Another fruit of the research was the comprehensive "come to us, show us, welcome us" strategy. That work identified the barriers—both practical and perceptual—that were blocking a

connection between Fleisher and neighborhood residents, and gave guidance on how to address them.

Ultimately, the process of conducting research is transforming the entire Fleisher organization into a measurement-based enterprise. The data let the institution understand the task at hand, set goals, and then measure how well it is moving toward those targets. Said Martinez, "The process itself of just doing the work and being asked to articulate what you're accomplishing and how you're accomplishing it, just starts to spread to everything else. We couldn't measure all this and do nothing with it."

Of course, it will be essential to continue this research. In a dynamic neighborhood such as Southeast Philadelphia, community research needs to be ongoing as groups move in, expand, and move out, and economic and other influences change the lives of residents and how they interact with organizations. While FAMbassadors and increased partnerships can provide more "eyes" and "ears" that keep Fleisher attuned to neighborhood developments, Gonzales estimated that to stay on top of neighborhood dynamics, some of the earlier research (e.g., focus groups and interviews with community organization leaders and residents) would need to be redone every five to 10 years.

MOVING FORWARD

Fleisher has considered community engagement a long-term process, one that will culminate in an organization that will be serving a different mix of people five years from now than it does today, and probably yet another mix 20 years in the future. Its goal hasn't merely been to attract Southeast Philadelphia families to its on-site offerings, but also to understand how to accommodate them and cultivate them as the Fleisher patrons and advocates of the future. While one could argue with good reason that the disinclined populations Fleisher is targeting may not be in a position to support the organization financially at this point, their children and grandchildren could be as adults, just as more affluent descendants of immigrants from the turn of the 20th century currently provide support to the organization. In fact, today's Southeast Philadelphia residents may turn out to be the critical factor that ensures Fleisher's financial stability in the future. "This is a long-term investment," Martinez explained. "The long-term health of this institution actually rests on engaging those new populations that are emerging. That's why our community engagement is not just a good thing to do, it is essential to our survival as the kind of organization we were created to be."

APPENDIX A:
MEMBERS OF THE SOUTHEAST PHILADELPHIA COLLABORATIVE

The Southeast Philadelphia Collaborative comprises six member organizations in addition to Fleisher Art Memorial:

- **Caring People Alliance**, providing children, their families, and their elders with high-quality, community-based programs and services that promote character building, educational achievement, healthy lifestyles, and teamwork
- **Cambodian Association of Greater Philadelphia**, which uses direct service, advocacy, and cultural education to improve the quality of life of Cambodian Americans in Greater Philadelphia
- **Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program**, which assists local school districts with improving and coordinating educational continuity for the children of migratory farm workers who have had their schooling interrupted
- **Sunrise of Philadelphia**, a group of educators and community service administrators who work to find solutions to the problems and issues of underachieving students
- **United Communities Southeast Philadelphia**, which works to foster social and economic justice and cultural harmony to build self-sustaining communities
- **Variety**, providing programs and services designed to address children's physical, social, medical, educational, and recreational needs

APPENDIX B: TIMELINE

PRELIMINARY ACTIVITY: 2007

Summer 2007: Community Needs Assessment
Identify deficiencies in and opportunities for artistic programming in Southeast Philadelphia, and explore demographics and access barriers facing residents

2008: Visitor Services Function Created
New function and dedicated staff to provide welcoming on-site experience for all visitors

2009: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH

Baseline Visitor Survey
- Shows 21% of visitors come from surrounding neighborhood

Student Focus Groups and Community Leader Interviews
Two focus groups with adult and teen students, and 5 interviews with community organization leaders, to explore perceptions of Fleisher and attendance barriers

Neighborhood Ethnography
3 teams observe 150 hours of various neighborhood settings, to build understanding of the neighborhood and the role of art within it

Conclusion: Fleisher's low awareness/relevance among underserved groups will limit success of new programs; initiative refocused on building awareness and trust in the community

2010: REFOCUSING THE INITIATIVE ON BUILDING AWARENESS AND TRUST

Community Focus Groups
Four focus groups with community residents to explore how Fleisher could build relevance in the community. Findings from this and earlier research lay the groundwork for new strategy: "Come to Us, Show Us, Welcome Us"

2010-2011: STAFF ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

Cultural Competency Training
Seven training sessions over three days, with full staff

Brown-bag Lunches
To share research and explain initiative to full staff

Community Engagement Workshops
To build awareness of tools, tactics, and resources

Site Visits (Staff and Board)
To community organizations and gathering places

2012 AND BEYOND: RELATIONSHIP AND AWARENESS BUILDING

ARTspiration!
Active recruitment of vendors, performers, and other partners from the surrounding neighborhood

ColorWheels
Mobile art studio taking art making to parks, festivals, schools, organizations, and gathering places

FAMbassadors
Liaisons recruited from among neighborhood residents

Culturally Informed Art-making Partnerships
Mostly youth-oriented art making in partnership with community organizations and festivals

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Bob has written hundreds of surveys and conducted hundreds of focus groups and interviews with broad audiences in 30 countries. He has more than a dozen scholarly publications in social psychology and research methods, and is the lead author of The Wallace Foundation publication series Wallace Studies in Building Arts Audiences. He has a PhD from Princeton University in social psychology and completed the postdoctoral program in quantitative analysis at New York University's Stern School of Business and Graduate School of Arts and Science.

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This look at Fleisher Art Memorial's initiative to bring residents of the surrounding ethnically diverse neighborhood to its onsite programs is the eighth case study in a series of 10 offering insights into how arts organizations can attract new audiences to the arts and deepen the involvement of current audiences. Written for arts organization leaders, arts funders, policymakers, and arts management students, each study is the product of independent research exploring the success and challenges faced by different arts organizations as they undertook multi-year efforts to build their audiences. Strategic and tactical elements of each program are described in depth, along with factors that helped and hindered progress. Putting together findings from the 10 case studies, a separate report, *The Road to Results*, describes nine practices that arts organizations can use to make their audience-building programs more effective.

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How the San Francisco Girls Chorus Is Breaking Down Stereotypes and Generating Interest Among Classical Music Patrons

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How Steppenwolf Theatre Company Is Turning Single-Ticket Buyers into Repeat Visitors

Someone Who Speaks Their Language:
How a Nontraditional Partner Brought New Audiences to Minnesota Opera

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Pacific Northwest Ballet Builds a Following with Teens and Young Adults

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