




# Setting the Stage: Practical Ideas for Implementing High-Quality Afterschool Arts Programs

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth benefit from involvement in the arts.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, youth from families with low incomes are about half as likely to have access to arts instruction as youth from families with more resources, due to cuts in arts education which disproportionately affect schools in under-resourced communities that have been economically and socially marginalized.<sup>2</sup> Arts programming outside of schools is also inequitably distributed, and when the arts are offered in low-cost settings such as multipurpose<sup>3</sup> afterschool programs, the programming tends to focus on arts and crafts rather than the creation of original artwork that develops formative artistic skills.<sup>4</sup>

**The Youth Arts Initiative (YAI) aimed to address the gap in access to high-quality arts by developing a sustainable and scalable model of arts programming in multipurpose OST organizations.** YAI was developed by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA)—an out-of-school time (OST) provider that offers community-based low-cost multipurpose OST programs in under-resourced communities that have been economically and socially marginalized. YAI is based on Ten Principles for High-Quality OST Arts Programs (see Figure ES.1 below).

**From 2019 through 2021, five Boys & Girls Club organizations, with startup resources from The Wallace Foundation, set out to test whether they could develop YAI within the resource constraints of multipurpose OST programs. This report shares early lessons learned by these five OST organizations which were documented by a two-and-a-half-year study.** It provides a preliminary roadmap for multipurpose OST organizations seeking to increase the quality of their arts programming and close gaps in access to high-quality arts programming. The findings shared in this report can also be used by organizational leaders to make the case to funders and policymakers that initial investments in a high-quality arts program infrastructure are needed and that those investments will expand access and equity in arts programming for youth.

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1 Elpus, K. (2013). *Arts education and positive youth development: Cognitive, behavioral and social outcomes for adolescents who study the arts*. National Endowment for the Arts.

2 Kraehe, A. M., Acuff, J. B., Travis, S. (2016). Equity, the arts, and urban education: A review. *Urban Review*, 48, 220-244. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-016-0352-2>; Parsad, B. & Spiegelman, M. (2012). *Arts education in public elementary and secondary schools: 1999-2000 and 2009-2010 (NCES 2012-2014)*. National Center for Education Statistics, Department of Education. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubns2012/2012014rev.pdf>

3 McCombs, J.S., Whitaker, A.A., & Yoo, P.Y. (2017). *The value of out-of-school time programs*. RAND Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE267.html>

4 Montgomery, D., Rogovin, P., & Persaud, N. (2013). *Something to say: Success principles for afterschool arts programs from urban youth and other experts*. The Wallace Foundation. <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/documents/something-tosay-success-principles-for-afterschool-arts-programs.pdf>

Figure ES.1. Ten principles for high-quality OST arts programming for youth



\* Dark purple denotes the principles that serve as the program infrastructure examined in this report.

Clubs focused investments in the three fundamental elements of arts program infrastructure—professional teaching artists, high-quality equipment and materials, and the creation of art studio space. The research documented lessons learned across cities with each of these infrastructure elements:

- **Lesson 1:** Teaching artists with youth development skills were perceived to be the non-negotiable ingredient for high-quality arts programs.
- **Lesson 2:** Current and high-quality equipment and materials are important for engaging youth in high-quality visual and digital arts programs and some performing arts programs. Dance programs, however, engaged youth regardless of available space, materials, or equipment.
- **Lesson 3:** Quality arts space is often not scalable for multipurpose OST organizations due to resource and other constraints, but high-quality arts programs can be implemented in less-than-ideal spaces with some limitations.

Clubs also developed promising approaches for implementing these infrastructure elements that allowed for stretching limited resources to reach more young people while still elevating arts program quality. These approaches are shared in the table on the following page.

While these approaches are promising, the research documented tradeoffs that program implementers should consider. Importantly, teaching artists that work part-time and are placed in more than one location need support from site-based and centralized organizational leaders to implement all aspects of high-quality arts programming. These considerations are detailed throughout the report.

## ABOUT THE STUDY

The report is based on research conducted in five Boys & Girls Clubs organizations and draws on multiple sources of data collected over two and a half years, including over 300 interviews and 42 program observations collected prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the research documented pandemic adaptations and captured final reflections from teaching artists and program leaders in June of 2021 when most YAI programming had resumed in-person, the claims in this report are described as early lessons because the research was not able to observe the full arc of program development under typical conditions. More research is needed to determine if the choices the five organizations made to create high-quality arts programs that benefit youth are sustainable over the long term. Additionally, future research could document how such choices impact young people.

Table ES.1. Lessons and promising approaches for creating an infrastructure for high-quality arts programming within the resource constraints of multipurpose OST organizations

<p>Promising approaches to <b>hiring and retaining teaching artists</b> in a multipurpose, resource-constrained OST setting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compensate teaching artists as content specialists to support hiring and retention.</li> <li>• Employ early career teaching artists as well as professional practicing teaching artists.</li> <li>• Hire part-time teaching artists for narrowly focused programming roles.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support part-time teaching artists with planning culminating events, engaging community partners, recruiting youth participants, and facilitating program and artist visibility at each site.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Assign teaching artists to no more than two locations and retain them in one site for at least one year.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign youth development staff to support teaching artists and youth when the teaching artist is not at the program site every day.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Contract with a community arts organization to staff some positions.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that teaching artists from these organizations can tailor programming to beginners and a drop-in environment.</li> <li>• Club staff should support artists from other organizations in recruitment and relationship-building with staff and youth at each site.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Promising approaches to offering <b>high-quality equipment and materials</b> in a multipurpose, resource-constrained OST setting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentionally cultivate donations of new equipment and materials by engaging industry partners in art form relevant fields.</li> <li>• Purchase one full set of materials or equipment for the art form and rotate materials from site to site.</li> <li>• Purchase a limited amount of high-quality equipment and materials and ask youth to share <u>but</u> ensure teaching artists have strategies to effectively manage the group to maintain youth engagement.</li> </ul>
<p>Promising approaches to offering <b>quality spaces for art programming</b> in a multipurpose, resource-constrained OST setting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in one or two high-quality art studios and create opportunities for youth across sites to access these spaces.</li> <li>• Make use of neighborhood community arts partners' or schools' art spaces.</li> <li>• If creating a high-quality art studio space is not an option, make minor renovations and modifications to make existing spaces more welcoming and artistically inspiring. Ensure spaces meet safety guidelines for the art form.</li> </ul>



## ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS USED IN THIS REPORT

**Out-of-School Time (OST) Program:** A program that takes place afterschool, in the summer, on nights or weekends

**Multipurpose OST Program:** An OST program that typically meets daily and engages youth with a variety of activities

**Multipurpose OST Organization:** An organization that specializes in afterschool, evening, weekend and/or summer programming that is not specific to a particular content area such as art

**Organization:** Throughout this report, organization refers to the umbrella multipurpose OST organization that offers multipurpose OST programs in more than one site

**Site:** Throughout this report, site refers to one multipurpose OST program location within a larger multipurpose OST organization

**BGCA:** Boys & Girls Clubs of America

**Teaching Artist:** An individual who is a practicing artist and teaches art in a variety of settings including schools, OST programs, and in the community. In this report, we distinguish between two types of teaching artists we encountered in this initiative who differed based on level of experience. These include:

**Professional Practicing Teaching Artist:** An artist who has a depth of knowledge in their art form and a robust professional portfolio

**Early Career Teaching Artist:** An artist who is early in their artistic practice and does not yet have a substantial professional portfolio

**Youth Development Professional:** A youth development generalist typically employed by OST organizations

**Quality Principles:** A framework of 10 principles that define high-quality arts programs



# I.

## Setting the Stage

### Introduction

Youth benefit from involvement in the arts.<sup>1</sup> Research suggests that the arts are a “spark” or motivating passion for many young people, and they offer significant opportunities for young people to develop the skills needed to creatively engage in economic and civic life.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, youth from families with low incomes are about half as likely to have access to arts instruction as youth from families with more resources, due to cuts in arts education which disproportionately affect schools in under-resourced communities that have been economically and socially marginalized.<sup>3</sup> Arts programming outside of schools can also be inequitably distributed. Specialized arts programming can be costly to access, and when the arts are offered in low-cost settings such as multipurpose<sup>4</sup> afterschool programs, the programming tends to focus on arts and crafts rather than the creation of original artwork that develops formative artistic skills.<sup>5</sup> The Youth Arts Initiative (YAI) was developed by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA)—an out-of-school time (OST) provider that offers community-based low-cost multipurpose OST programs to youth in under-resourced communities that have been economically and socially marginalized—to address this gap in access to high-quality arts programming. During the period 2014-2018, with significant support from The Wallace Foundation, three BGCA affiliate organizations successfully implemented YAI in six sites (two locations per city), offering visual, performing, and digital arts.<sup>6</sup>

However, like many OST organizations, the affiliate organizations implementing YAI aim to engage a large number of youth, across multiple sites, with a variety of activities within the resource constraints<sup>7</sup> of the afterschool field. Consequently, BGCA encountered tensions as it developed its YAI programs because of the more costly infrastructure, as compared to arts and crafts programs, needed to implement, sustain, and scale these programs across their sites. In 2019, BGCA, with startup resources from The Wallace Foundation and a matching grant requirement, asked five additional affiliate organizations to

1 Elpus, K. (2013). *Arts education and positive youth development: Cognitive, behavioral and social outcomes for adolescents who study the arts*. National Endowment for the Arts.

2 Scales, P.C., Denison, P.L., & Roehlkepartain, E.C. (2011). Adolescent thriving: The role of sparks, relationships and empowerment. *The Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 40(3), 263-277. Doi: 10.1007/s10964-010-9578-6.; Kraehe, A.M., Acuff, J.B., & Travis, S. (2016). Equity, the arts, and urban education: A review. *Urban Review*, 48(2), 220-244. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-016-0352-2>

3 Kraehe, A.M., Acuff, J.B., & Travis, S. 2016; Parsad, B. & Spiegelman, M. (2012). *Arts education in public elementary and secondary schools: 1999-2000 and 2009-2010 (NCES 2012-2014)*. National Center for Education Statistics, Department of Education. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012014rev.pdf>

4 McCombs, J.S., Whitaker, A.A., & Yoo, P.Y. (2017). *The value of out-of-school time programs*. RAND Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE267.html>

5 Montgomery, D., Rogovin, P., & Persaud, N. (2013). *Something to say: Success principles for afterschool arts programs from urban youth and other experts*. The Wallace Foundation. <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/documents/something-to-say-success-principles-for-afterschool-arts-programs.pdf>

6 BGCA's efforts and lessons learned were documented in two research reports funded by The Wallace Foundation: McClanahan, W. & Hartmann, T. (2017). *Raising the barre and stretching the canvas: Implementing high-quality arts programming in a national youth serving organization*. The Wallace Foundation. <https://wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/documents/raising-the-barre-report.pdf> and McClanahan, W. & Hartmann, T. (2018). *Designing for engagement: The experiences of tweens in the Boys and Girls Clubs' Youth Arts Initiative*. The Wallace Foundation. <https://wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/documents/RFA-MAI-Designing-for-Engagement-Executive-Summary.pdf>

7 Joyce, H.D., Wade-Mdivanian, R., Anderson-Butcher, D., & Gibson, A. (2014). Afterschool sustainability. *Journal of Youth Development*, 9(4). <https://doi.org/10.5195/jyd.2014.40>

test out approaches for implementing YAI with scaling and sustainability in mind. **This report examines how the five affiliate organizations sought to improve the quality of their arts programming and leverage this time-limited, matching grant to create a sustainable infrastructure for arts programming. The report is designed for leaders of OST organizations who are trying to improve the quality of their arts programs or start new high-quality arts programs within the context of multipurpose programming.**

## About This Study

This study is based on the experiences of five Boys & Girls Club organizations in geographically diverse cities that implemented YAI from January 2019 to June 2021. All five were moderately sized or large organizations with multiple sites and were selected, in part, because they desired to increase the quality of their arts programming. The table below displays the characteristics of these five organizations, including the total number of sites and youth served annually across all the organizations’ sites. As the table shows, YAI was initially implemented in a small number of the organizations’ sites, but scaling YAI, eventually, was important for all five organizations.

Table 1. Number of sites overall, sites implementing YAI, and youth served annually by organization

Organizations	Total Number of Sites	Number of Sites Implementing YAI as of Spring 2020	Number of Youth Served Annually
Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta	24	3	~8,000
Boys & Girls Clubs of the Austin Area	27	5	31,137
Children’s Aid NYC	17	5	7,841
Boys & Girls Clubs of the Tennessee Valley	20	5	6,700
Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida	36	7	6,868

Data source: Program documents from organizations, 2020; program enrollment data, January 2019 - March 2020.

1184 youth ages 10 to 18 participated in YAI across these five organizations. In many ways, YAI participants reflected the demographics of the youth served by the organizations overall. With respect to race and ethnicity, 64% of YAI participants identified as African American or Black (compared to 62% of all Club members) and 22% identified as Hispanic/Latinx (compared to 24% of all Club members). Among youth who reported whether they participated in Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL) programs, 91% of YAI members participated in FRL programs (compared to 92% of all Club members). YAI attracted a disproportionate number of females—56% of YAI participants were female compared to 45% of all Club members.

These five organizations launched YAI in Spring 2019 in just a few sites to develop, refine, and test YAI’s implementation on a small scale. In Fall 2019, they began implementing YAI in more sites. The art forms that were implemented fell into three broad categories:

- **Performing Arts:** Dance, theater
- **Digital Arts:** Graphic design, photography, film, digital music
- **Visual Arts:** Painting, drawing, pottery

In March 2020, the pandemic disrupted programming and the development of organizations’ YAI programs. Organizations continued to implement YAI, but many temporarily changed their delivery approaches (e.g., virtual classes for youth at home, teaching artists “Zooming” into sites from another location), and, in some cases, who they served.

## HOW COVID-19 IMPACTED THIS STUDY

The COVID-19 pandemic disruptions had implications for this study. While the study includes data over 30 months of YAI's implementation from January 2019 through June 2021 (including 15 months of data on YAI's implementation before the pandemic and 15 months of data on YAI's implementation during the pandemic), the research was not able to observe the full arc of program development under typical conditions. While the research documented pandemic adaptations and captured final reflections from teaching artists and program leaders in June of 2021 (when most YAI programming had resumed in-person), the claims in this report are described as early lessons and considerations for how to create the infrastructure (staffing, space, and equipment or materials) to improve the quality of arts programs in a resource-constrained environment. We focus on the development of program infrastructure because this is a necessary first step in the development of any program and had largely been determined by the start of the pandemic. In addition, it is the costliest element of high-quality arts programs and therefore required making decisions about if and how elements of a high-quality arts program infrastructure could be implemented in a sustainable way. The experimentation of these five organizations in developing an infrastructure for higher-quality arts programming provides insight into the priorities, promising approaches, and tradeoffs in creating an arts program infrastructure that is sustainable for a multipurpose OST program in the context of the resource-constrained environment in which these organizations operate. However, more research is needed to determine if the choices the five organizations made to create high-quality arts programs that benefit youth are sustainable over the long term.

The lessons shared in this report draw on multiple sources of data collected during two and a half years of the research including over 300 interviews and 42 program observations. Details of data collection are below (see Appendix for further details):

- **In-person site visits** in Spring 2019 and early Spring 2020 (prior to widespread shutdowns due to the pandemic), which included structured program observations (N=42) and interviews with a range of stakeholders. Total interviews conducted over these two rounds of in-person site visits are detailed below:
  - Interviews with **site and organizational leaders and YAI managers** (N=139)
  - Interviews with **teaching artists** (N=56)
  - Interviews or focus groups with **caregivers** (N=46)
  - Focus groups with **youth** participating in YAI (N=43 focus groups with 214 youth)
- **Virtual site visits** in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 which included interviews with similar, though fewer, stakeholders. These included:
  - Interviews with **organizational leaders and YAI managers** (N=17)
  - Interviews with **teaching artists** (N=16)
  - Focus groups with **youth** participating in YAI (N=10 focus groups with approximately 31 youth, conducted only during Spring 2021)
- **Quarterly calls** with organizational leaders and YAI managers, BGCA, and Wallace Foundation YAI management throughout the initiative
- **Pre-COVID wage and labor data** from four of five organizations
- **Pre-COVID YAI participation data** through March 2020
- Organizations' **YAI plans and reports**

The analysis of this data draws on 10 quality principles described in the Wallace Foundation-funded report *Something to Say: Success Principles for Afterschool Arts Programs from Urban Youth and Other Experts*,<sup>8</sup> as well as research on the first phase of YAI’s implementation in three Boys & Girls Club organizations.<sup>9</sup> Interview, focus group, and observational data, which are the primary data sources for this report, were coded and analyzed each year of the study. Analysis was conducted by organization to better understand the uniqueness of each model and across organizations to identify themes common in at least two of the five organizations. The findings shared here draw most heavily on themes that emerged in the first two years of the initiative as well as in final interviews with organizational leaders in 2021. Findings from 2020-21, which focused primarily on lessons learned about virtual programming, were added where relevant, such as youth perspectives on teaching artists. See Appendix for more details on the methodology used in this study.

## Quality Principles for OST Arts Programming

The YAI model is defined by 10 principles for high-quality OST arts programs as displayed in Figure 1. These quality principles, documented in the report *Something to Say: Success Principles for Afterschool Arts Programs from Urban Youth and Other Experts*,<sup>10</sup> stemmed from research on community arts programs, interviews with youth development experts, and input from teens about what they wanted in an arts program.

Figure 1. Ten principles for high-quality OST arts programming for youth

<p><b>PRINCIPLE 1:</b> Instructors are teaching artists valued with compensation for their expertise &amp; investment in their professional development.</p>	<p><b>PRINCIPLE 7:</b> Youth participants actively shape programming &amp; assume meaningful leadership roles.</p>
<p><b>PRINCIPLE 2:</b> Executive leaders publicly commit to high-quality arts programming &amp; support it through sustained action.</p>	<p><b>PRINCIPLE 8a:</b> Programs focus on hands-on skill building.</p>
<p><b>PRINCIPLE 3:</b> Arts programs take place in dedicated, inspiring, welcoming spaces &amp; affirm the value of art &amp; artists.</p>	<p><b>PRINCIPLE 8b:</b> Programs use current equipment &amp; technology.</p>
<p><b>PRINCIPLE 4:</b> Programs have a culture of high expectations &amp; respect for creative expression. They affirm youth participants as artists.</p>	<p><b>PRINCIPLE 9:</b> Programs strategically engage key stakeholders to create a network of support for youth participants &amp; programs.</p>
<p><b>PRINCIPLE 5:</b> Programs culminate in high-quality public events with real audiences.</p>	<p><b>PRINCIPLE 10:</b> Programs provide a physically &amp; emotionally safe space for youth.</p>
<p><b>PRINCIPLE 6:</b> Positive relationships with adult mentors &amp; peers foster a sense of belonging &amp; acceptance.</p>	<p>* Dark purple denotes the principles that serve as the program infrastructure examined in this report.</p>

8 Montgomery et. al., 2013.

9 McClanahan & Hartmann, 2018; McClanahan & Hartmann, 2017.

10 Montgomery et al., 2013.

These principles suggest approaches to delivering high-quality arts programming that differ from how multipurpose OST organizations typically design and implement arts programming. For example, three of these **quality principles (Principles 1, 3, and 8b) describe the infrastructure needed to support artistic skill development which is not typically found in multipurpose OST programs.** This includes:

- Staffing by **teaching artists** who can mentor youth as artists,
- The **latest high-quality tools and equipment** to learn art skills, and
- **Near professional, dedicated, and inspiring studio spaces** with the functionality needed to learn the art form safely and effectively.

Infrastructure in multipurpose OST organizations, by contrast, is typically designed to support a wide range of activities. Consequently, arts activities are often led by youth development professionals who are generalists and not prepared to support youth artistic voice or skill development. Arts and crafts programs typically take place in multipurpose spaces which often lack key features needed to learn an art form and may offer more basic equipment and materials.

High-quality arts programs also differ from arts and crafts activities because they hold **high expectations for artistic skill development and respect youth as artists (Principle 4)**, encouraging them to produce original artwork. In addition, high-quality arts programs **culminate in public events (Principle 5)** that allow young artists to showcase their work and be supported by a wide range of stakeholders, a practice not often employed for arts and crafts activities.

**Other quality principles (Principles 6 to 10) reflect common youth development practices that are recommended for all OST programming though not always realized.** These include the presence of **positive adult-youth and peer-to-peer relationships (Principle 6)**, **youth input (Principle 7)** in daily programming and the overall design of programming, the ability of youth to be **hands-on in their learning (Principle 8a)**, and **physical and emotional safety (Principle 10)**. While these practices are encouraged in multipurpose OST organizations, they have unique applications in arts programming. For example, arts programs may require higher levels of emotional safety for youth to take risks producing art, and arts programs present unique physical risks, which range from hazards associated with the use of chemicals in visual arts to physical injuries in dance.

High-quality arts programs also rely on support from the broader organization and the community in which the arts programs take place. At the organizational level, **leadership needs to be as committed to arts programming (Principle 2)** as to other program areas such as sports and academics and publicly speak about the value of arts. The organization also needs to **engage the broader community (Principle 9)**, including but not limited to parents and caregivers, as audiences and partners in supporting young artists.

**Prior research on YAI found that when organizations have a strong infrastructure, including staff, equipment, and space, other elements of quality are likely to follow (though this is not guaranteed), and youth will be attracted to exploring familiar or new art forms.**<sup>11</sup> For example, the training and experience of teaching artists, especially given the appropriate tools, equipment, and studio spaces, allows them to hold **high expectations for youth artistic skill development (Principle 4)** and support youth in producing original artwork. However, some youth development practices may be unfamiliar to a teaching artist, and artists may require additional training and support to successfully implement these.

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<sup>11</sup> McClanahan & Hartmann, 2018; McClanahan & Hartmann, 2017; Montgomery et. al., 2013.

High-quality studio spaces are designed to mitigate physical risks and provide privacy to **ensure emotional safety (Principle 10)**, and current equipment and technology also further **hands-on learning (Principle 8a)**. Finally, quality infrastructure supports the development of **organizational and community support (Principles 2 and 9) for young artists**. For example, while organizational leaders (Principle 2) must support the initiative from the outset, their attention to arts programming can wane in a multipurpose organization in which varied program areas are vying for resources and attention. Teaching artists can be compelling spokespeople for these programs within the organization and continue to bring organizational attention to the value of these programs. Teaching artists' support for high-quality youth work showcased in culminating events (Principle 5) can draw new public attention to youth arts programming as well. Finally, high-quality spaces and current equipment attract the attention of youth, caregivers, and community members including potential partners and donors.

## CREATING AN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR HIGH-QUALITY ARTS PROGRAMMING

The YAI model from *Something to Say* defines best practices in each of these infrastructure elements as follows:

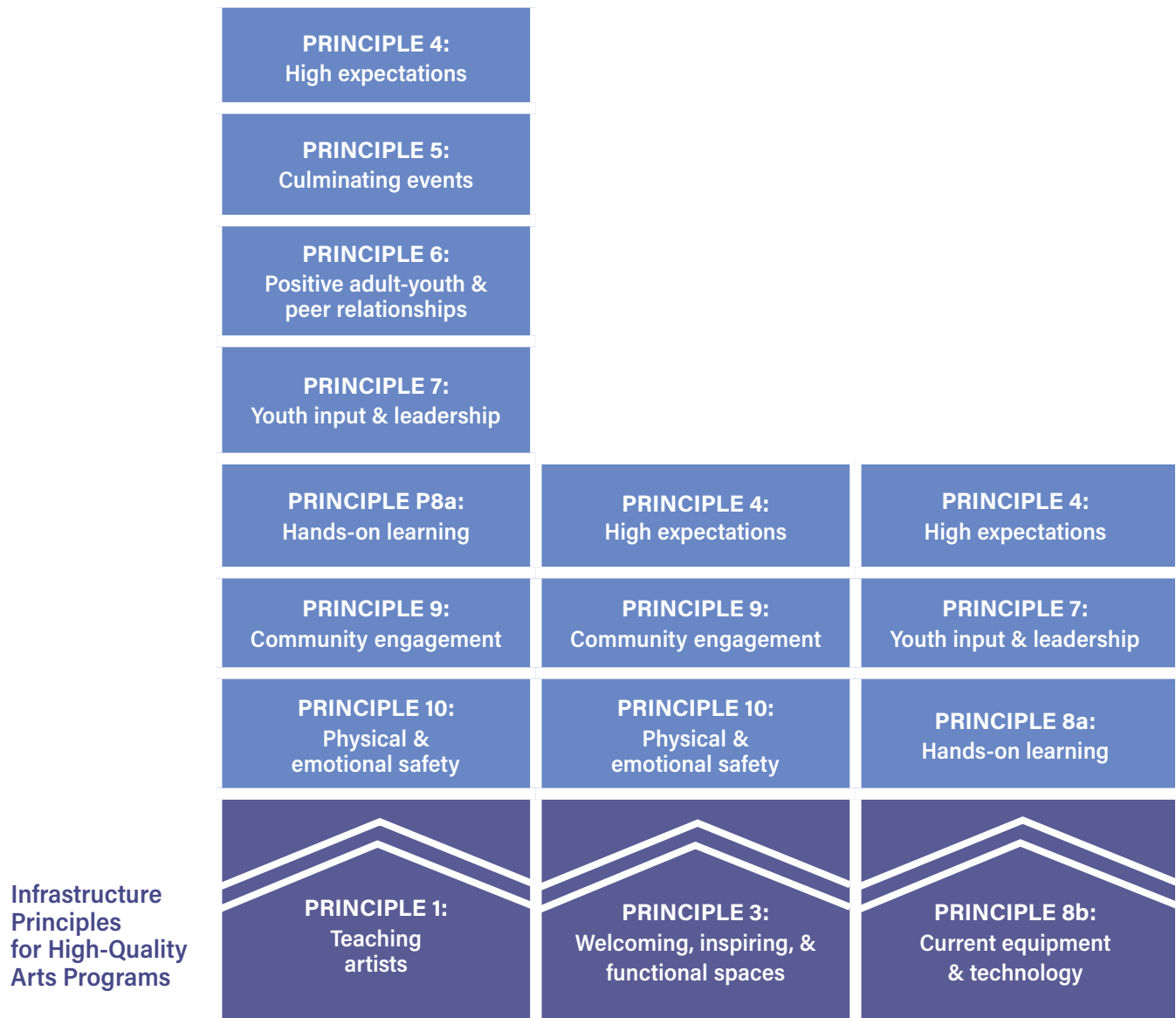
**Staffing:** High-quality arts programs must be led by **teaching artists** who are valued for their skills with appropriate compensation and professional development. Professional practicing teaching artists are necessary because they have the arts expertise to offer skill development-focused programming rather than simply arts and crafts. In addition, prior research on YAI documented that most also bring strong youth development skills enabling them to implement all the other youth development best practices, though some may require additional support in this area. Professional practicing teaching artists typically have training in the art form and multiple years of experience earning income as a professional in the field.

**Equipment:** High-quality arts programs focus on hands-on skill building using current and high-quality materials, equipment, and technology. High-quality materials allow teaching artists to hold high expectations for youth by providing youth with the tools they need to generate original artwork. Such materials support experiential learning that promotes mastery of artistic skills and concepts. They facilitate youth input since youth have what they need to implement their artistic visions. Additionally, they make young artists feel their interests are valued. The Wallace Foundation report *Something to Say* also noted that there needs to be enough high-quality equipment and materials to go around so that youth do not get bored while they are waiting.

**Space:** High-quality arts programs take place in art spaces that are functional specifically for the art form, are inspiring and affirm the value of arts and artists, and are spaces that are dedicated— not shared—with other programs, even when the art class is not in session. Examples of functionality include: 1) a large dance studio with Marley floors, barres, mirrors, and a sound system 2) a visual art studio where youth can get messy (e.g., paint on the ground and tables) and that features storage spaces for materials, ventilation, sinks, and art tables and chairs. Studios are dedicated to the art form, meaning that they are not used by other programs, so that, for instance, youth in visual art classes can leave their in-progress work out to dry and fashion design youth can keep their in-progress creations and materials accessible. Best practice art spaces should also be inspiring and welcoming spaces that affirm the value of art and artists and incorporate youth and teaching artist input into the design of the space.

Figure 2 below displays the infrastructure principle (i.e., teaching artists (P1), welcoming, inspiring, and functional spaces (P3), and current equipment and technology (P8b)) that serves as the building block for other quality principles.

Figure 2. Relationships between infrastructure principles and other quality principles



**In addition to their role in enabling the implementation of other quality principles, prior research on YAI<sup>12</sup> has found that these three infrastructure principles are essential for engaging young people, including those who are familiar and unfamiliar with the art form.** *Something to Say* research found that middle and high school youth, who are difficult to attract to and keep engaged in multipurpose OST programs, are motivated to participate in arts programs when they feel that the instructor “knows what they are doing” and can bring real life professional arts experiences and a “wow” factor from professional successes to programming. Prior research on YAI<sup>13</sup> also shows that teaching artists’ personal recruitment efforts are key to attracting youth to programming. Additionally, high-quality studio spaces, equipment, and materials signal to youth that the organization values art and their

<sup>12</sup> McClanahan & Hartmann, 2018; McClanahan & Hartmann, 2017; Montgomery et. al., 2013.

<sup>13</sup> McClanahan & Hartmann, 2018; McClanahan & Hartmann, 2017.



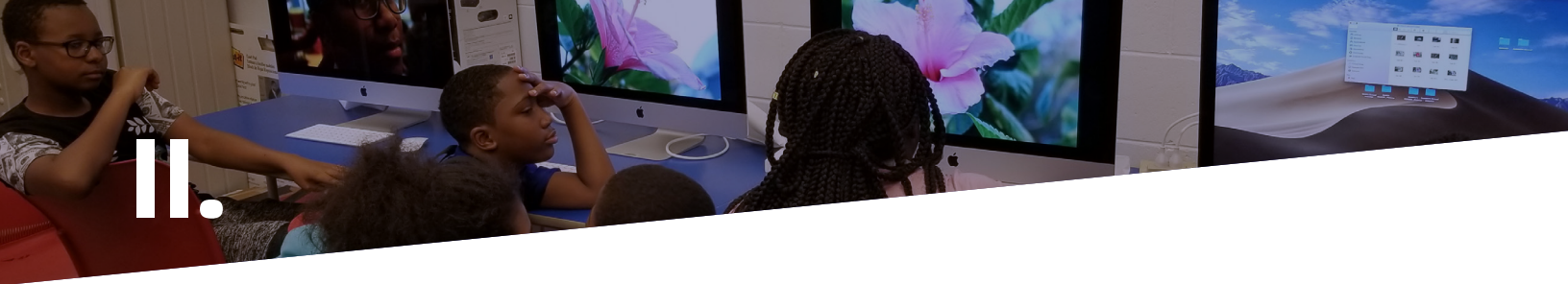
artistic expression and creates a “buzz” in the building, piquing youth curiosity to try something new. Current and high-quality materials and equipment also help to retain youth in the program by facilitating hands-on activities which youth crave.

### Quality Infrastructure Comes First

With an initial three-year investment, five organizations were asked to develop a high-quality arts program that reflected all 10 principles and would eventually be sustainable after the initial investment had ended. Given the size of these organizations, sustainability was also tied to scalability within their organizations (e.g., making high-quality arts programming available to a broader set of youth across more of their sites).

**All five organizations recognized that they had to develop the quality infrastructure elements as a first step in achieving implementation of all the other quality principles and supporting youth engagement in the arts. However, these infrastructure elements were perceived to present the greatest challenges to sustainability and scaling because they require a significant investment of resources.** Therefore, as organizations strategized about how to best use available resources, they considered which infrastructure elements to prioritize and how to design them in the most cost-effective way. **The approaches and lessons presented in this report center on how organizations implemented these three infrastructure elements, which create the conditions for elevating arts program quality.**

The remainder of this report describes lessons from the five organizations and their early efforts to implement YAI at a cost that was sustainable and can facilitate scaling to young people across all the organizations’ sites. Next, more details are provided about specific approaches to implementing each of these infrastructure elements.



# Site lines

## What Multipurpose OST Organizations Learned about Creating the Infrastructure for Higher-Quality Arts Programs

Organizations made strategic investments to create an infrastructure for YAI performing, digital, or visual arts classes that they could financially sustain over time and afford to replicate in multiple sites, given the reality of resource and other constraints in the OST field. They determined which of the three infrastructure elements to prioritize and how widespread their implementation would be across the pilot sites involved in YAI. As a result of these choices, some YAI classes operated with all the elements of a high-quality infrastructure while other YAI classes were implemented with some elements but not others. In general, the resulting arts programming was perceived by site leadership to be higher quality than previous arts programming, and research documented youth engagement and the presence of many of the 10 principles in many of the programs running by early spring of 2020. However, it was too early to tell if these programs would develop to achieve full implementation of all 10 principles in a consistent and sustainable way by the end of the initiative. Across all five sites, the following common early lessons surfaced:

### LESSON 1:

Teaching artists with youth development skills were perceived to be the non-negotiable ingredient for high-quality arts programming.

All five organizations prioritized teaching artists, and the majority of their art classes were taught by teaching artists. Teaching artists were responsible for implementing many of the other quality principles and were able to mitigate some challenges when space and equipment were not ideal. Youth were attracted to working with the teaching artists and appreciated the high expectations they were able to hold. As one participant stated, “she makes sure to challenge us, because she believes in our artistic abilities...She pushes me farther.” At the end of the study, leaders and managers at all five organizations and their sites identified teaching artists as the difference making element for improving the quality of their arts programming. As one stated:


“She makes sure to challenge us, because she believes in our artistic abilities...She pushes me farther.”  
[Youth participant]

*And in the beginning, I was like, “Okay, we have to have what? Teaching artists, why?” And over time, it really started clicking with me. The more I engaged with our teaching artists and had conversations with them [I] really understood not only their passion, but their skill set too, and what they brought to the table. So, to me, I think that to have that high quality, you do have to have teaching artists, and you do have to have people that it’s more than a passion, it is their skill set too... I think that’s critical for a successful arts program.*

## LESSON 2:

Current and high-quality equipment and materials are important for engaging youth in high-quality visual and digital arts programs and some performing arts programs. Dance programs engaged youth regardless of high-quality materials, equipment, or space.

YAI participation data shows that youth attended digital and visual arts programs more frequently when the classes featured high-quality materials, and youth in focus groups expressed appreciation for the opportunity to create art with these new and high-quality tools. The types of art that youth can produce in visual and digital art classes depend on the materials available, and youth appreciated the opportunity to develop a variety of artistic skills. For instance, youth expressed more excitement for visual art classes that had materials and equipment to allow for painting, sketching, and molding over those that just featured one of these options. As one youth commented: *“Usually I will come in here [and] crochet, paint—do the projects that’s in here. Or I’ll do clay if it’s [an] option.”* They also appreciated the freedom they had to explore materials: *“[The teaching artist] brings in good paint brushes, good oil pastels, the paint. So, we get to use it and it’s pretty professional.”*

 **[The teaching artist] brings in good paint brushes, good oil pastels, the paint. So, we get to use it and it’s pretty professional.**

**[Youth participant]**

However, the presence of high-quality equipment and materials had mixed impact on performing arts programs, depending on the art form. On the one hand, youth, parent, and teaching artist interviews suggested that lack of materials or equipment for theater programs detracted from youth interest in the art form. On the other hand, participation in dance classes was not impacted by limited equipment and materials. Organizations typically purchased little more than Bluetooth speakers and costumes for this art form. Because youth interest in dance was high, materials and equipment were not a factor that drew youth to the program.

Inadequate spaces were also not a deterrent to youth interest in dance. A few dance studios with appropriate flooring, mirrors, and barres were created across the initiative, but dance classes also took place in gymnasiums, classrooms, multipurpose rooms, or even outdoors. Dance teaching artists who taught in spaces that were not dance studios frequently commented on the impact of inadequate space (e.g., the size of the space and the flooring) on youth safety or their ability to teach dance skills. Despite these limitations, dance classes were well attended even when they were not held in spaces designed for dance.

## LESSON 3:

Quality arts space is often not scalable for multipurpose OST organizations due to resource and other constraints, but high-quality arts programs can be implemented in less-than-ideal spaces with some limitations.

Multipurpose OST organizations serve youth with many different interests and therefore offer many different types of programs. As such, creating a space for a single type of program or designating the space to a single program type limits possibility. Further, multipurpose OST organizations often operate in schools or other public buildings such as recreation centers or public housing developments and cannot easily modify these spaces to create high-quality art studios. Four of the five organizations in this study made efforts to implement the space quality principle fully or partially in at least one site—a site where they had control over the space. They also offered YAI classes in existing multipurpose

rooms, some of which they made modifications to—such as painting the walls a bright, inviting color, offering comfortable furniture for relaxation, or decorating the room with artwork. Some spaces were dedicated to YAI, but most were shared with other programs. While less than ideal spaces narrowed the range of projects and skills that could be taught (e.g., projects that required in-process work be left out to dry could not be conducted in spaces that were used by other programs), the initiative demonstrated that if youth were being taught by a skilled teaching artist with high-quality equipment and materials, they were engaged, and other elements of quality programming were present. As one experienced teaching artist explained:

**I'm able to do with that space what I want to do, and I can decorate it any kind of way...It's tough, because it's so small and I need space, but I've made it work.**

**[Teaching artist]**

*I'm able to do with that space what I want to do, and I can decorate it any kind of way. The space is...It's tough, because it's so small and I need space, but I've made it work. I don't let it become a hindrance to me because I'm thinking you work with what you've got, and that's what I've got, and that's what I'm working with, but it is a very small space.*

Teaching artists, while working within the limitations of the spaces they were given, also noted that these multipurpose spaces could create both physical and emotional safety concerns which should be considered. Physical safety considerations included dancing in spaces with inappropriate flooring and using paints and sprays for visual arts in spaces that did not have appropriate ventilation. One teaching artist expressed concerns about physical safety in a multipurpose space being used for dance, saying:

*I think it would be great if there were some different floors in there maybe. Some hardwood floors...the [current flooring], that's not good on the ankles...You don't have to get the Marley because that's really expensive, but some hardwood floors that has, it's called a sprung floor. Get that.*

Emotional safety considerations included conducting arts programs in spaces visible to youth in other program activities which could inhibit youth self-expression.

In summary, these five organizations offer an array of lessons about how to create an infrastructure that supports higher-quality arts programming in the resource-constrained environment in which multipurpose OST programs operate. They also point to tradeoffs and considerations of these approaches for program implementers. Below is a program example that illustrates these cross-organization lessons. The next section of this report (Section III) presents the promising approaches organizations used to implement the three elements of high-quality arts program infrastructure, as well as a few approaches that early data suggests may undermine either program quality or youth engagement.

## PROGRAM EXAMPLE:

### High-Quality Arts Programming in a Multipurpose OST Program

One organization offered an instrumental music program at a site located in a public housing complex. The site served the surrounding neighborhood with an average daily attendance of 60-100 youth. It had limited space to host high-quality arts programming, and the organization could not easily modify the space because it did not own the facility. But the organization matched the site with an experienced (20 years) professional musician and music educator and charged her with figuring out how to implement a high-quality arts program in this space. The organization hired a music educator to lead the program because surveys and informal conversations with youth suggested they had an interest in music. Once hired, the teaching artist suggested offering an instrumental music program with hand chimes. In her experience, hand chimes were a good entry level instrument for teaching music skills. However, she did not take youth interest in the art form for granted and did demonstration lessons which allowed youth to handle and try various instruments. In focus groups, all youth reported they had an interest in learning a musical instrument. As one youth said, *“I love music, and I never played an instrument before, so I wanted to do it.”*

The site director assigned the program to a small multipurpose space (one of only three rooms available for programming in the building). Other site activities shared the space with the music program; therefore, hand chimes had to be set up and taken down for each class. The space could only seat 10-12 youth comfortably, and the instructor reported that the space was tight when she assembled full performance-ready hand chimes tables and stands. Youth hit their elbows on radiators and did not have the full range of arm movement needed. As one youth in a focus group said, *“One thing I would really like as far as a change, is to have more room.”* Also, the space was not emotionally safe in that other youth could observe and hear the group during the program. As one youth said about the room, *“people kept looking at us and laughing at us.”* But, while the space compromised emotional safety, youth in focus groups did not report feeling unsafe with each other.

Despite space limitations, youth were engaged in the music program, and youth in a focus group reported attending every day and only missing when they had other commitments outside of the program. They described what they liked about the program, saying:

*The reason I like it is because we learn new stuff every day. And we get to prove to [teaching artist], shout out to [teaching artist], that we pay attention, and we get to do in a fun way, we get to do rhymes and stuff. Yeah, [teaching artist] is the best.*

Youth also described learning music concepts and skills in the program, including how to read music and learning to play the hand chimes. One youth stated, *“what I know how to do now is like read the notes and know what to play.”*

The teaching artist attributed the program’s success in part to the brand-new hand chimes, chime stands, and gloves for performers purchased by the organization. The teaching artist selected the hand chimes herself and was pleased that the organization permitted the purchase of high-quality equipment.

The new equipment, in addition to the teaching artist’s professional expertise, enabled her to implement other quality principles. For example, the instructor conveyed high expectations by teaching youth musical notation and terminology, by referring to youth as performers throughout the class, and by expecting and keeping their consistent focus throughout the period. She also fostered positive relationships with youth. One youth stated she was *“like a grandmother,”* and other youth reported that even when she was frustrated, she stayed calm and *“talked you through it.”* She also provided leadership opportunities and responsibilities for youth. In focus groups, two youth described being “co-assistants.” One explained this role saying, *“And what I do as a co-assistant, if I see somebody having trouble...They will tell us ‘I need help.’ And so, I would come over there and help them if they needed something on the music.”* The teaching artist was just beginning to engage with caregivers and had invited them to a rehearsal for a performance at the site as a first step. Despite space limitations, the teaching artist was able to implement—or at least begin to implement—other principles of high-quality arts programming.



# In the Spotlight

## Approaches Used by Multipurpose OST Organizations for Creating a Sustainable Infrastructure for Higher-Quality Arts Programs

This section describes *how* five organizations addressed each of the three critical infrastructure elements (staffing, materials and equipment, and space) for high-quality OST arts programming. Considering the common lessons organizations were learning about which of these elements were priorities and the obstacles to their feasibility, the five organizations made hard choices in their approaches to implementing each of these elements to ensure they could sustain and scale them within the resource constraints of the OST field. For example, they modified approaches to hiring teaching artists to ensure they could staff as many programs as possible with these content experts. They explored various strategies for purchasing high-quality equipment and materials to ensure that as many youth as possible, at least in digital and visual arts, had access to the tools they needed. And they modified spaces and considered other approaches to giving youth, where possible, access to art studio spaces. **This section describes promising approaches observed in two or more organizations for modifying each infrastructure element to ensure it was sustainable and scalable.** We also share several innovative responses to implementation that emerged in a single organizations and approaches that did not appear to be effective based on early data. A description of each type of finding is below:

- **Promising approaches:** those adopted in at least two cities to support sustainability; early data suggests that these approaches resulted in improvements in the quality of arts programs and maintained youth engagement. However, these promising approaches still involved tradeoffs that should be considered by program implementers.
- **Innovative responses:** those implemented in just one city; early data suggests they supported the implementation of higher-quality arts programming.
- **Approaches that did not appear to work:** those implemented in one or more cities; early data suggests they undermined either program quality or youth engagement.

The approaches shared in this section are based primarily on data from the first two years of the initiative (pre-pandemic) as well as leader reflections at the end of the initiative in 2021. However, it is important to note that due to pandemic disruptions, we were not able to follow a typical arc of program development and some approaches that appeared effective early on might have presented more challenges later. Additionally, some approaches that appeared to be problematic initially might have been able to work by the end of the initiative if not for pandemic disruptions.

## APPROACHES TO HIRING TEACHING ARTISTS

While organizations perceived teaching artists to be a non-negotiable component of the infrastructure of higher-quality arts programming, hiring teaching artists initially created concerns among organizational leaders as they considered their ability to offer compensation that was attractive to teaching artists and sustainable over time. The research revealed five promising approaches (displayed in Table 2) for addressing this tension. These approaches appeared to address the sustainability concerns of organizational leaders because, at the end of the initiative, leaders expressed confidence that they would be able to retain their teaching artists and sustain their compensation. Each approach and its tradeoffs are discussed below.

Table 2. Promising approaches to hiring and retaining teaching artists in a multipurpose, resource-constrained OST setting

**1.1 Compensate teaching artists as content specialists** to support hiring and retention.

**1.2 Employ early career teaching artists** as well as experienced professional practicing teaching artists.

**1.3 Hire part-time teaching artists for a more narrowly focused programming role** and provide staff support for some elements of high-quality arts programming. Support part-time teaching artists with planning culminating events, engage community partners and caregivers, and facilitate program and artist visibility at each site.

**1.4 Assign teaching artists to no more than two locations and keep them there for at least one year.** Assign youth development staff to support teaching artists and youth when the teaching artist is not at the program site every day.

**1.5 Partner with a community arts organization** to staff some positions. Ensure teaching artists from community arts organizations tailor programming to beginners and a drop-in environment. Provide support for recruitment and relationship-building with staff and youth at each site.

### ➤ **APPROACH 1.1:**

**Compensate teaching artists as content specialists to support hiring and retention.**

**Takeaway:** Typical OST frontline wages will not attract or retain teaching artists, and turnover of artists undermines program quality and youth engagement. However, mission-driven teaching artists can be attracted and retained with wages that are appropriate for content “specialists” in OST organizations.

In multipurpose OST organizations that do not charge or charge very little for youth participation, the workforce has historically been comprised of part-time workers compensated less than a living wage.<sup>14</sup> However, organizations included in this study realized over time that they had to provide higher compensation to teaching artists than what was typical for frontline staff in their organizations. In the first year of the initiative, two of five organizations attempted to attract artists with either the same or only slightly higher wages offered to other frontline staff, and they found that this led to difficulty in hiring and to turnover of teaching artists. As a result, they began to increase wages, and two organizations gave teaching artists the title of “specialist” which justified their higher wages compared to those of other frontline staff. The “specialist” role is not uncommon in OST organizations that often

<sup>14</sup> Langreo, L. (July, 2022). Afterschool programs face perfect storm of staffing and funding problems, survey finds. *Education Week*. <https://edweek.org/leadership/after-school-programs-face-perfect-storm-of-staffing-and-funding-problems-survey-finds/2022/07/>; Lieberman, M. (March, 2022). Afterschool programs are low staff, leaving students unsupervised and underserved. *Education Week*. [https://edweek.org/leadership/afterschool-programs-are-low-on-staff-leaving-students-unsupervised-and-underserved/2022/03](https://edweek.org/leadership/afterschool-programs-are-low-on-staff-leaving-students-unsupervised-and-underserved/2022/03/)

hire certified teachers at higher than typical rates to lead academic programs. Even after wages increased, however, **they were not always ideal or equal to what teaching artists could earn in other settings.**<sup>15</sup>

Organizations remained concerned about their ability to sustain artist wages over the long haul, given the resource constraints of the OST field. Wages varied by region, organization, and teaching artist experience, ranging from \$10 per hour to \$40 per hour in 2020 with two thirds of teaching artists making \$15/hour or more.

**Organizations adjusted part-time hours to compensate for the wages they provided.** In some cases, they increased hours when wages were perceived to be too low. As one organizational leader reported:

*They're not full-time, but we give them the most hours that we can, which is 29 hours a week. We're able to give them more hours than we do our part-time [youth development] staff, and we're able to pay them more, four dollars more than our regular part-time staff because of their specialty in the program.*

In other cases, the organizations decreased hours per week to compensate for higher wages. For example, teaching artists in one organization who were hired by a community arts organization and paid at the high end of the compensation range worked only six hours per week.

Across the initiative, teaching artists expressed mixed views on the adequacy of their compensation. In 2020, about two thirds of teaching artists hired directly by the organization (rather than a community partner) and interviewed for this study<sup>16</sup> were satisfied with their compensation, but one third, primarily professional practicing teaching artists, were not satisfied. One professional practicing teaching artist shared:

*You do so much, you give so much, and in some cases, you're not compensated how you think you would like to be...I feel like I could be compensated more, but that's just how I feel. But neither here nor there, I've always been blessed by doing what I do.*

To offset lower wages, more than half of these teaching artists had to supplement their income with freelance work. At the same time, teaching artists also displayed a mission-oriented commitment to young people that helped retain them despite the less-than-ideal wages.

Early career teaching artists were not dissuaded by the wages offered by the organizations and were more likely than professional practicing teaching artists to report feeling their wages were “fair.” One early career teaching artist who earned \$14 an hour shared that their compensation was comparable to or better than what they earned elsewhere and shared, “*I was like, ‘Oh wow. I just graduated; this is a pretty good job for fresh out of graduation.’*”

When the OST organizations partnered with community arts organizations to hire teaching artists, the community arts organizations typically offered higher wages to artists because they did not have to

**You do so much, you give so much, and in some cases, you're not compensated how you think you would like to be.**

[Professional practicing teaching artist]

**I was like, ‘Oh wow. I just graduated; this is a pretty good job for fresh out of graduation.’**

[Early career teaching artist]

<sup>15</sup> We use the term “market-rate” to mean wages the teaching artists received in other art positions and/or what other art positions are offering. Teaching artists defined what “market-rate” was for them.

<sup>16</sup> N=27 teaching artists interviewed in 2020.



align with the multipurpose OST organization’s pay scale. Or, in one case where teaching artists from a community arts organization were paid directly by the multipurpose OST organization and were not satisfied with the wage that was offered, the community partner supplemented artists’ compensation to reduce turnover.

### Considerations for Teaching Artist Compensation

- **Investing in teaching artist compensation is an investment in quality programming and youth engagement.** Adequate compensation contributes to teaching artist retention. Teaching artists were able to develop deeper mentoring relationships with youth and provide sustained opportunities for skill development when they were retained in a program over a year or more. Conversely, the turnover that occurred in two of five sites in the first year of the program undermined youth interest and engagement.
- **Organizations should consider what teaching artists are able to earn in other professional venues and look for ways within their existing pay structures to offer comparable rates.** While organizations may not be able to match rates offered in professional artistic venues, they could consider rates offered to certified teachers or other content specialists in their organization.
- **Organizations should consider all aspects of compensation including wages, hours, and professional development to attract and retain teaching artists.** Organizations should think creatively about incentives to attract and retain teaching artists. However, if organizations reduce artist hours to enable higher compensation, they should be aware that other staff will need to provide support for key functions like program recruitment.

#### INNOVATIVE IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSES:

##### University and school district-based virtual and in-person professional development resources

Professional development was another form of compensation for teaching artists suggested by the quality principles. While all five organizations offered some training related to the quality principles, youth development, virtual programming, and social and emotional wellness, only one offered teaching artists opportunities to learn and grow in their own artistic development. Several of these professional development sessions were considered highlights of the year by the teaching artists. The organization’s approaches to ensuring professional development are described below.

**University-based Virtual Professional Development:** The organization obtained grants to support arts-focused professional development opportunities for their teaching artists. During the pandemic shutdown, the teaching artists were able to receive virtual professional development from a Yale University arts faculty member who conducted group as well as personal professional development for teaching artists.

**School District Arts Educator Professional Development:** In addition, this organization developed a relationship with its local school district which enabled the teaching artists to attend professional development for the district’s arts educators and tapped into arts educator networks to identify state and regional arts education conferences.

## APPROACH 1.2:

Employ early career teaching artists as well as experienced professional artists.

**Takeaway:** Early career teaching artists can offer quality arts programming which engages young people, and they may be more easily recruited and retained at a multipurpose OST program than professional practicing artists. However, early career teaching artists may need more support from a program leader and cannot yet model the professional career path of an artist.

In two of the five cities, organizations that were struggling to recruit teaching artists modified the profile of teaching artists they were willing to hire for their arts programs. Rather than limiting their search to currently practicing professional teaching artists, they hired early career teaching artists for some of the positions. These teaching artists were recent graduates or current students in an arts training program. Most had a limited professional track record and either had not yet been paid for their work or had been paid on a very limited basis. Some were also youth development professionals who had arts experience and training and wanted to transition into an arts-focused position. Organizations were willing to consider hiring these early career teaching artists because, due to the lower than market-rate wages they were offering, they sometimes had difficulty attracting more experienced professionals. More than one third of teaching artists hired between 2019-2020 (16 of 44) were early career teaching artists. However, early career teaching artists comprised at least half of the teaching artists in two organizations (five of nine and three of four) and in one, they taught or co-taught 80% of the classes.

**Program observations suggest that early career teaching artists can implement arts programming at a similar level to more experienced artists.** For example, observations of 23 teaching artists<sup>17</sup> in early 2020, including six early career teaching artists and 17 professional practicing teaching artists, did not reveal marked differences between the quality of programming offered based on different levels of professional experience. Both groups implemented most of the quality principles at moderate or high levels including the one observable principle tied to artistic expertise, setting high-expectations for artistic skill development.<sup>18</sup> Both groups also implemented most youth development principles<sup>19</sup> at high or moderate levels but struggled in the areas of facilitating positive peer relationships and utilizing youth input and leadership in their programming. While there was variation in the extent to which we observed all the principles being implemented, this variation was not between teaching artists with different levels of professional artistic experience.

**Youth enrollment, participation, and engagement in the organizations' arts programs also did not differ between early career teaching artists and professional practicing teaching artists.** Early career artists were typically younger than professional artists, and some early career artists perceived this to be an asset in connecting with youth, particularly because they had more familiarity with youth culture. Youth in focus groups were aware of and interested in their teaching artists' skills, whether they were early career teaching artists or professional practicing teaching artists. For example, youth described the background of one early career teaching artist, saying:

*She did ceramics in college, and she also did contests...And then when she explained [her artwork] we go, "What did you do with it?" She said, "I just do stuff at home." When she does stuff at home, she brings us it for examples.*

<sup>17</sup> The research team conducted one observation of each teaching artist in Spring 2020 using a structured observation rubric.

<sup>18</sup> Indicators of high expectations include using or teaching art form specific terminology, creating challenging arts activities and activities that allow youth to create original artwork, encouraging youth to improve their work, be creative or imaginative in their work, and try new skills, referring to youth as artists, exposing them to professional art work, providing models or demonstrations of artistic skills, facilitating peer critique, and having high expectations for youth program attendance and conduct in the program.

<sup>19</sup> Youth development principles including positive adult-youth relationships (Principle 6a), positive adult-youth relationships (Principle 6b), hands-on activities (Principle 8a) and youth input and leadership (Principle 7) and physical and emotional safety (Principle 10).

However, as the quote above illustrates, early career teaching artists did not always have examples of how they had earned a living from their artwork and were less able to model the career path of an artist. In addition, early career teaching artists did not yet have the extensive professional networks which professional practicing teaching artists possessed and could leverage on behalf of the program.

Some early career teaching artists also needed support and mentoring from organizations' leaders or other teaching artists to develop their programs and manage youth. For example, in early 2020, at least three of six early career teaching artists were receiving regular guidance and coaching from leaders on youth development related situations that arose in programming, while only one professional practicing teaching artist reported needing this support. Other professional practicing artists relied on organizational leaders primarily to navigate organizational administrative expectations.

### Considerations for Employing Early Career Teaching Artists

- **Early career teaching artists may be more available and affordable for some organizations, particularly as organizations attempt to scale programming to multiple locations.** Early data suggests their training and content expertise can help to improve the quality of OST arts programs, and their younger age may be an asset in engaging youth.
- **If early career artists are hired, consider how to support the development of their youth development skills.** While a limited set of program observations did not reveal differences in the quality of programming, interviews suggested there could be differences in the amount of support these artists might need. Organizational or site leaders should be prepared to provide training, coaching, and other support to early career teaching artists.
- **If early career artists are hired, consider how to connect them with professional networks and support their artistic professional development.** Programs could support their development by having other more experienced artists on staff or helping connect them to partnering community arts organizations and making artistic professional development opportunities available to them.

### ➤ **APPROACH 1.3:** Hire teaching artists part-time for a more narrowly focused programming role.

**Takeaway:** Early data suggests that part-time teaching artists can provide high-quality arts programs if their hours are focused exclusively on providing arts programming for youth. However, part-time artists have less time to plan culminating events and engage caregivers and community partners. Part-time teaching artists should be supported by an organizational leader who can take on these activities.

As is typical in the OST field, nearly all the teaching artists hired across the five organizations (41 of 44 artists) worked part-time in their teaching roles. Quality arts programming requires ample planning time to create programs that follow youth interests, hold high expectations for youth skill development, and build towards public showcases. Therefore, unlike other OST staff in the building, who often had pre-packaged curricula to support structured programming, part-time artists could not regularly take on other program responsibilities such as snack time or bus duty, and their roles were focused only on delivering arts programming to youth. Part-time teaching artists were compensated for between six to 29 hours per week, with most at 20 hours per week. This meant they were present in one or more sites for five days per week for four hours each day—most of the afterschool program period. However, even with a more narrowly focused role, part-time teaching artists still reported working extra hours, which could have long-term impacts on staff retention. These artists reported working an average of about five extra unpaid hours per week to accomplish all their responsibilities, particularly program planning.

Despite their part-time hours, program observations suggested that these teaching artists were implementing most of the quality principles at moderate or high levels in their programming. Also, youth in focus groups across all five organizations reported that they liked both their full-time and part-time teaching artists and felt engaged in programming. Some relationships between youth and part-time teaching artists that were developed in-person helped to retain youth in virtual programming during the pandemic shutdowns, particularly in cases where the part-time teaching artists were dedicated to one site.

Two quality principles, however, culminating events and community engagement, were only beginning to be implemented at the end of the first year and through the efforts of organizational leaders or supportive site leaders. Interviews with caregivers after the first year of the initiative revealed that most had very limited contact with the teaching artists and knew little about sites' arts programming. While all three of the full-time teaching artists had contact with caregivers, part-time teaching artists varied in the extent to which they interacted with caregivers and frequently relied on other site staff to tell caregivers about the program. Part-time artists were also supported by site directors in recruiting youth to programs. However, if dedicated to one location, they had more opportunities to be visible and known by all youth in the program which aided recruitment efforts.

### Considerations for Part-Time Teaching Artists

- **If hiring teaching artists part-time, recognize they may have less time to engage in other site responsibilities outside of programming, such as bus or snack duty, given the demands of developing and implementing the 10 principles of high-quality arts programming.** Ensure that other program staff understand how teaching artists' roles and responsibilities differ from their own, but also look for opportunities for teaching artists to engage with other staff and be part of the larger team.
- **If hiring teaching artists part-time, consider planning and prep-time in determining their hours and responsibilities.** Recognize that teaching artists will need time to develop original curricula and lesson plans that are responsive to youth interests and designed to lead to culminating events.
- **If hiring teaching artists part-time, identify organizational support for teaching artists.** A centralized organizational leader could organize cross-site culminating events in support of all artists, and site level leaders or staff could support caregiver and community engagement on behalf of the arts program.

#### **INNOVATIVE IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSE:**

**Hire a few full-time professional practicing teaching artists to support and supervise part-time and early career artists.**

In one organization, two full-time professional teaching artists were hired and given broader responsibilities that included planning program activities for their own programs as well as the part-time teaching artists' programs, circulating in sites to recruit participants and develop relationships with other staff, purchasing supplies, organizing culminating events, and developing community partnerships. These two teaching artists partnered with part-time artists to plan and oversee programming in one art form in a designated set of sites. The model enabled hiring more artists, including several hired through community arts organizations, and programming required less support from site leadership.

## APPROACH 1.4:

Assign teaching artists to no more than two sites and retain them in the same sites for at least one year.

**Takeaway:** Early data suggests that teaching artists can serve more than one site effectively, but there is likely a limit to how far their time can be stretched to still enable them to implement quality arts programming. Pairing teaching artists with other youth development staff can address some of the challenges of this model.

Three organizations asked part-time teaching artists to work in more than one site to reach more youth on a weekly basis. In two organizations, teaching artists were assigned to two sites and spent two days per week at one site and three days per week at another site. One organization began to stretch the artists to three sites per week with one site having only one day with the artist. Organizations adopted this approach to enable more youth to be served by the artist and in lieu of transporting youth to a centralized high-quality art studio known as a “hub.” Artists generally stayed at their sites for at least one year to support the development of relationships with young people. One organization considered rotating artists to two new sites after each semester but met with resistance from teaching artists who believed they needed continuity to truly develop relationships with young people and foster artistic skill development.

**Teaching artists with two site assignments reached more youth each week than artists at one location and, if they were able to stay at the sites for at least a year, developed mentoring relationships with youth.** While teaching artists had less time in each site to develop mentoring relationships and offer high-quality arts programming, teaching artists reported positive relationships with youth if they were able to maintain a consistent presence in the site over time. A teaching artist who traveled to two school-based sites each week reported that in the second semester, youth knew and trusted her because they had seen her first semester. Another part-time teaching artist reported, “*Yeah, I’ve noticed that [site], that’s been my most consistent location. And I can tell that the kids just genuinely are very excited and relieved to have a consistent art program...*” However, at least one teaching artist and a leader in one organization in which artists were visiting more than two sites per week reported difficulties with the teaching artists connecting with youth and effectively supporting skill development in locations which they visited infrequently. The experience of this organization suggests that assignments to more than two sites risk undermining program quality and youth engagement.

**Teaching artists visiting multiple sites did not typically take on other site responsibilities and across sites reported that they relied on the site director or other staff to help recruit youth to the program.** While teaching artists were asked to circulate in the site to engage youth in their program, all site directors described program recruitment as their responsibility. For example, site directors in one organization held their own in-house events, visited or emailed other schools and community centers, and communicated one-on-one with caregivers and youth to support recruitment efforts. But, in one organization, leadership wanted teaching artists to spend more time recruiting. As one site leader explained, “*We have had issues and struggles with some of our [teaching artists], not being as vigilant as they could be about recruiting...*” On the other hand, teaching artists reported being at capacity with their multiple program responsibilities.

**I can tell that the kids just genuinely are very excited and relieved to have a consistent art program...**

**[Teaching artist speaking about the site they visit most frequently]**

## Considerations for Rotating Teaching Artists

- **Rotating teaching artists to multiple locations may challenge teaching artists' opportunities to develop mentoring relationships and do deep skill building with youth in any one location.** Our early data suggests that two locations each week might be the maximum number of sites for teaching artists to visit and they should remain in those locations for at least a year.
- **If rotating teaching artists, recognize that they will need help with program recruitment and integration into the program site.** Teaching artists who teach across multiple sites are likely to be even less embedded in any particular site than a part-time artist who is assigned to only one site. Therefore, they will rely more on site-based leaders and other staff to recruit youth to their program and ensure youth attend on program days. They will also need more help in building relationships with other staff and becoming a part of the program team at a particular site.
- **If rotating teaching artists, consider identifying an organizational point of contact or manager who can support teaching artists across locations in aspects of high-quality arts programming.** Like part-time artists, rotating artists will need organizational support planning culminating events, developing community partnerships, and communicating program activities to caregivers and other community stakeholders.

### INNOVATIVE IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSE:

#### Youth development professional assigned to support rotating teaching artists

One organization hired an arts program assistant (APA) to pair with the rotating professional teaching artist. The APA position was intended for a youth development professional with some art skills though not necessarily formal arts training. The APA was based in one site to provide continuity for the arts program when the teaching artist was in another location. For example, the APA could offer open studio time for youth to continue working on their projects on days when the teaching artist was not available. They also provided a consistent artistic instructor and mentor at the site.

The APA model is a promising strategy to mitigate the limitations of splitting teaching artists' time across multiple sites. Site directors perceived that APAs helped recruit more youth to the arts programs in part because their consistent presence in the sites enabled them to get to know more youth. In addition, one site director reflected that the two unique styles and personalities of the APA and teaching artist appealed to a broader range of youth. The APAs reported higher levels of integration in their sites than the teaching artists because they were able to attend staff meetings and other site events and offer other arts activities.



## APPROACH 1.5:

### Contract with a community arts organization to staff some positions.

**Takeaway:** Community arts partners offer high-quality arts programming but must take time to learn the multipurpose OST program context and adapt to it. For example, they may need to calibrate their programming to a drop-in culture and mostly beginner audiences.

All five organizations partnered with community arts organizations to varying degrees to staff one or more classes in different art forms. Across the initiative, teaching artists from community arts partners were hired to teach dance, theater, and digital music programming. In one organization, the community partner hired, trained, and supported all the teaching artists and developed a curriculum to run theater programming across multiple sites. In other organizations, teaching artists from community arts partners came in to provide one of the multiple art forms offered, particularly if the organization couldn't find a teaching artist to offer that art form or they did not want to fully commit to the art form (e.g., did not want to purchase all the needed infrastructure and/or hire a staff teaching artist).

Community partnerships were appealing because they added capacity to hire teaching artists quickly, and they could offer consistent and regular professional development and other support for the teaching artists. However, community partner-led arts programming sometimes encountered challenges integrating its efforts within the organization's existing multipurpose programming and ensuring strong youth participation. It was most successful when youth had an interest in the art form and input into how the art form would be offered.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, it was important for community partners to develop their own relationships with site directors to embed their programming and facilitate recruitment and logistics. For example, the head of the community-based dance program described above was intentional about meeting all site directors and cultivating a relationship with them. In one site, they offered additional programming after learning that the site director wanted to serve younger youth. She also attended programming regularly to provide coaching and support for her early career dance instructors.

**Interviews and observations showed that at least in the first year, some community partner teaching artists had high expectations for skill development yet were not always prepared to calibrate their efforts to beginners or youth dabbling in the art form and were not always responsive to youth interests.** Multipurpose OST programming was a different environment for some (though not all) teaching artists used to offering programming in community arts organizations. High-quality arts programs are striving to develop youth art skills, which requires regular program attendance. Some teaching artists were not used to the drop-in environment where youth typically have the freedom to come when they want and attend whatever activity they choose without making a commitment. In these organizations, many youth were beginners and unsure if they were interested in the artform but wanted to explore it. In community arts organizations, youth typically sign up and their caregivers often pay for programming, whereas in multipurpose OST organizations, teaching artists had to meet youth where they were and be responsive to youth interests. Otherwise, youth could easily find another activity. A packaged program or curriculum, often prepared for teaching artists by the community arts organization, did not interest young people in this environment, which resulted in poor attendance or low engagement in program activities. Also, the packaged curriculum did not reflect some quality principles such as youth input in program projects or daily activities.

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<sup>20</sup> For example, one organization chose an art form based on the presence of a strong community arts partner who could provide programming. However, youth interest in this art form was low and the program struggled to attract participants. In another organization, dance was offered by teaching artists from a community partner organization that had a similarly limited amount of time in the site for programming, but dance classes were always near capacity.

**Youth engagement in programs run by community arts partners varied, and, in some cases, programs were poorly attended.** Community partner teaching artists were not always able to spend enough time on-site for mentoring or recruitment purposes. Most teaching artists from community arts organizations were in the sites even less time than the part-time artists who were on the staff of the organization. They were often contracted to come into the site to provide a few hours of programming once or twice a week and were less well-known by youth. This lack of familiarity with the artist may have contributed to lower levels of engagement. However, this was also coupled with youth level of interest and familiarity with the art form. As noted above, in one organization, a lack of familiarity or interest in the art form led to poor program enrollment.

### **Considerations for Contracting Artists through a Community Arts Organization**

- **Contracting teaching artists through a community arts organization offers flexibility.** Organizations can test out youth interest in art forms for short-term experiences, and a trained cadre of artists enable quick hiring and substitutions if one artist is out. However, to support the development of mentoring relationships, teaching artists from community arts organizations would ideally remain at designated sites for a full year.
- **Teaching artists from community arts organizations have professional support from their home organizations.** Artists from community arts organizations are supported by professional development and market-rate compensation and bring the capacities of those organizations, including connections to the broader arts community and access to performance spaces for culminating events.
- **Teaching artists from community arts organizations may not be familiar with a drop-in setting with beginners or youth who simply want to explore the art form.** Programming in these settings should respond to youth interests both in developing long term projects as well as daily program activities. Without responsiveness, these programs may struggle to engage youth.
- **Teaching artists may need to spend additional non-programming time on-site to learn the multipurpose context,** form mentoring relationships, and develop visibility which helps to attract youth to their programming. As with other staffing models, site staff should be prepared to support the teaching artists with understanding the program culture and developing deeper relationships with program staff, youth, and caregivers.



### **APPROACH THAT APPEARED TO UNDERMINE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:**

Scripted lessons for youth development staff to expose youth to the art form rather than develop art skills

As one organization grappled with scaling its arts program in a resource-constrained environment, it recognized it might not be possible to offer arts programming taught by a teaching artist across all its organization's sites. It experimented with the idea of training youth development staff to lead scripted visual arts activities with new and more varied art supplies. These programs were designed to interest youth in pursuing skill development classes in the art form with a teaching artist in the future. As the initiative neared an end, other organizations were considering this approach to help scale the program. While scripted lesson plans and art supplies elevated program quality over a typical arts and crafts program, the implementation of some quality principles (youth input and high expectations for youth as artists) was limited, and youth were less engaged in these programs. It was too early to tell if this type of programming would help spark an interest in the art form that would lead youth to pursue it in the future. Also, it was unclear how the approach might translate beyond visual arts.

## APPROACHES TO PROVIDING HIGH-QUALITY EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

High-quality equipment and materials were an important element of the infrastructure for higher-quality arts programming, particularly for digital and visual art forms. However, these were not in place as consistently across arts programs as was staffing by teaching artists. Only 52% of classes overall had high-quality equipment and materials; 58% of visual arts programs and 92% of digital arts programs had access to them. Programs that did not have current and high-quality equipment and materials worked with more basic supplies, such as crayons instead of oil pastels, or utilized used or outdated equipment.

Materials and equipment investments presented two challenges to organizations. First, the initial investment in materials and equipment, particularly the technology needed for digital arts, was expensive and required upgrades to the organizations' internet capacities. Second, ongoing investments are needed to maintain and upgrade technology over time, and in visual arts, supplies are consumable and require regular replenishment. For both art forms, the costs are significant, as multipurpose OST organizations have the goal of making high-quality arts programming available to a broader set of youth across more of their sites. Finally, balancing youth interest with equipment investment is a challenge. Youth's interests can evolve over time, and youth in different sites may have different artistic interests. Nonetheless, organizations made these investments for many of their programs and were committed to sustaining these initial investments over the long haul. They also experimented with several cost-saving strategies to stretch resources and ensure as many programs as possible could have access to high-quality equipment and materials. These approaches are displayed in Table 3 below and explained in more detail in the section that follows.

Table 3. Promising approaches to offering high-quality equipment and materials in a multipurpose, resource-constrained OST setting

- 2.1 **Intentionally cultivate donations of new equipment and materials by engaging industry partners in art form relevant fields.**
- 2.2 **Purchase one full set of materials or equipment for the art form and rotate materials from site to site.**
- 2.3 **Purchase a limited amount of high-quality equipment and materials for each site which youth must share.** Ensure that teaching artists are prepared with strategies to facilitate sharing.

### **APPROACH 2.1:** Intentionally cultivate donations of new equipment and materials by engaging partners in art form relevant fields.

**Takeaway:** Art form-aligned corporate or community partner sponsorship of equipment and materials is a promising approach for obtaining high-quality equipment and materials.

While organizations budgeted for purchases of new equipment and materials for some art forms and locations, they also sought out donations of new and donated equipment to expand access to these resources. At least two organizations were able to obtain donations of new and current materials and equipment for some programs from art form-aligned corporate or community partners for whom the donation of these materials supported their own goals and interests. For example, one organization was already "sponsored" by a large corporation in the film industry. At the start of the initiative, the company offered to donate 48 new cameras to one of their sites to support their digital arts program. Another organization developed a partnership with a community arts organization, and once the pandemic began,

this arts organization was looking for a way to help children and youth. It offered to donate high-quality art supplies to that organization's visual arts program. These donations were ongoing after the arts organization saw the artwork youth were creating. Towards the end of the study, a third organization had intentions to approach a large technology company in their city about their digital arts program's ongoing need for new technology and equipment.

## Considerations for Obtaining Donations of Materials and Equipment

- **Donations of new equipment or materials can help stretch limited program resources and provide high-quality experiences to young people while also helping to build community partnerships and public audiences for youth artwork.** In some instances, the partnership may form around other aspects of programming and donations follow. In other instances, a donation request to an industry-aligned corporate partner could initiate a relationship and lead to other tangible opportunities for corporate and community partners to get involved.
- **Donations will not solve all the organization's equipment and material needs.** Organizations should plan to make initial and ongoing investments in equipment or materials as they require replenishing and upgrades to remain high-quality.
- **Donations of used equipment or materials often do not support high-quality experiences.** For example, used electronic equipment or musical instruments could be unreliable and undermine programming and youth engagement. Used uniforms or shoes may not be appropriate for a variety of body or foot sizes.

### APPROACH THAT UNDERMINED PROGRAM QUALITY:

#### Donated secondhand equipment

While the quality principles call for current equipment and technology, two organizations initially experimented with donated or older equipment and supplies, a common approach to addressing supply needs in the resource-constrained OST field. Their experience supported the findings of the *Something to Say* report—used equipment can be an impediment to youth engagement and skill development. In two programs, donated musical instruments often had mechanical problems that interfered with their operation. One teaching artist described the challenges of secondhand equipment:

*Instruments, we do have a ton of instruments, but not a lot of them work. They're in various states of disrepair. New instruments would go a long way. When we pull out an instrument and it doesn't work, that's time that gets taken away from teaching the youth. Well, now we have to go dig out another one, dig out another one. You know what I mean? So...new, functional instruments would go a long, long way.*

In another instance, the site received donated ballet shoes for a dance program but realized they were all too small for their dancers' feet. Multipurpose OST organizations should be mindful of potential challenges presented by donations of secondhand equipment or supplies and not rely on these if they seek to implement high-quality arts programming.



## APPROACH 2.2:

Purchase one full set of equipment for the art form and rotate equipment from site to site.

**Takeaway:** Moving equipment from site to site is a viable approach for providing youth with access to high-quality equipment; however, it's not feasible for all art forms. Visual and applied arts were best suited for this approach, whereas moving equipment for digital arts (e.g., computers) was more difficult.

To manage equipment, materials, and technology costs, one organization rotated art forms and their materials from site to site. For example, teaching artists brought laptops, musical instruments, and visual arts supplies with them as they traveled from site to site each week. Early in the initiative, one leader described this approach:

*So, it does take a level of communication and understanding of your inventory, but it allows you to maximize your dollars, because you're not buying enough for every program participant. So, you can still buy high-quality easels, but you only have to buy 20-50 versus buying 150. So that's one thing that we've tried to do, to think strategically about how we maximize those dollars.*

**You can still buy high-quality easels, but you only have to buy 20-50 versus buying 150. So that's one thing that we've tried to do, to think strategically about how we maximize those dollars.**

[Leader]

Teaching artists sometimes moved equipment and materials using their personal vehicle. To support rotating teaching artists in managing these supplies, each teaching artist had an identified "home" site where they had a storage closet to store supplies and equipment.

### Considerations for Moving Equipment Across Sites

- **Rotating equipment can help reach more youth but also means that youth have less time to engage with the materials.** When equipment and materials are stationary at a particular site, youth at that site have more consistent access to them than if they are moved from site to site, which may have implications for skill development. Site leaders should consider the tradeoff of depth versus breadth when planning their program.
- **If rotating equipment and materials is desired, consider which types of equipment and materials can be easily transported from site to site on a regular basis (these choices may impact which art forms can be offered).** Rotating equipment across equipment-intensive arts classes, such as digital arts, is challenging or impossible. Some equipment cannot be moved easily, such as desktop computers and monitors for digital arts and sound booths for music production.
- **Consider ways to support teaching artists in rotating equipment.** Rotating equipment and materials places an extra burden on teaching artists if they are responsible for this task, and it risks damage to equipment. In addition, it presents challenges for managing organizational inventory and maintenance of equipment and materials.

## ➤ APPROACH 2.3:

Purchase a limited amount of high-quality equipment and materials and ask youth to share.

**Takeaway:** Expecting youth to share materials and equipment was successful with a skilled teaching artist and the right type of project.

Some organizations invested in high-quality equipment, materials, and technology but, in considering resource constraints, experimented with purchasing less than their expected class size, which meant that participants had to share. For instance, one organization reported investing in fewer computers and having youth share as an approach to keep costs down for digital art. Instead of purchasing 20 new computers for all 20 youth, they purchased four and planned for youth to work in teams or rotate.

**Sharing equipment and materials worked to keep youth engaged with the right type of project and when the teaching artist had a plan to minimize or eliminate the amount of time that youth were idle.** For instance, one teaching artist was working on screen printing projects with his students. The class had only one printing press and one exposure unit. To mitigate the challenge of waiting for equipment, the teaching artist created different stations for youth—design drawing, screen preparation, exposure, stencil creation, and printing. Youth were engaged in different parts of the process within their projects, there was no waiting for equipment, and all youth were engaged in hands-on activities throughout the class period. According to one youth from that class:

*And everybody's working on different stages. There'll be one person washing their screen and another person putting the ink on. So, I feel like there's no need to buy more because then it's just going to sit there, and the same people are going to be using it.*

Another teaching artist described using different stations in class to enable youth to choose their project type and avoid challenges with sharing equipment and materials.

**On the other hand, without intentional and careful planning, sharing equipment and materials can create group management and engagement challenges.** For instance, researchers observed one digital arts class which was attended by 14 students but only had four computers. On the day of the observation, the class was engaged in a peer critique. Because there were only four computers, youth had limited time to present and there was a lag in the class as youth transitioned to the computers to display their artwork. During idle time, some youth appeared bored and became disruptive.

### Considerations for Equipment Sharing

- **Teaching artists may need professional development in planning and staging lessons with shared equipment to keep all youth engaged.** For example, teaching artists can create stations around a visual or digital arts studio so all youth can be engaged using different types of equipment or materials.
- **Teaching artists may need additional staff support for lessons in which youth share equipment and are engaged in different activities at the same time.** While an experienced teaching artist might be effective in managing a group engaged in multiple activities at once, other teaching artists may need the support of other staff to monitor student progress and answer questions so they can remain engaged.

## INNOVATIVE IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSE:

### Free online software for digital arts at home

After the pandemic began, several organizations started to implement digital arts programs virtually. Youth lacked the high-quality technology that was available at the sites, but teaching artists recognized that youth could use their phones or school laptops. However, they lacked the necessary software. Teaching artists in one organization identified free software that youth could download at home to continue to create digital art and music. For example, youth in a digital arts class were introduced to a software toolset called Blender, which youth could use to create digital art, including animation and motion graphics. This software was an asset to programming and enabled youth to continue to work on digital art projects at home. One leader described the availability of these free online resources as an important lesson learned. He advised other OST programs to explore these options, even for digital arts programs that take place in person.

*I definitely would say do their research into those free programs that can offer a high-quality output or a unique learning experience. Like there's a program that lets you turn pictures into a [sound] wave form...You can run it through a video player, and it'll play sound so you can ...listen to pictures. That's a unique experience for kids—taking a picture of themselves, converting it to a [sound wave] and then listening to [it]...unique experiences like that I think are, are, are a great way to keep kids engaged.*

## APPROACHES TO MANAGING SPACE CONSTRAINTS

Creating high-quality space for arts programs was the greatest challenge for organizations. Many multipurpose OST programs operate in partner spaces, such as schools, public recreation facilities, or public housing facilities where they do not have full control over the spaces where they run programming. Even when multipurpose OST organizations have control over their space, they do not always have enough space to dedicate to specific types of programming because they offer so many different types of programming. For this reason, most multipurpose OST organizations value multipurpose spaces so they can meet youth interests, which change over time. Within these limitations, the organizations in this study attempted to create or identify a few studio-quality spaces and make minor modifications to other spaces. The research identified three promising strategies the organizations tried to increase access to and the quality of their arts spaces in a way they felt was sustainable.

Table 4. Promising approaches to offering quality spaces for arts programming in a multipurpose resource-constrained OST setting

- 3.1 Invest in quality arts studios in one or more sites and create opportunities for youth across sites to access these spaces.**
- 3.2 Make use of neighborhood community arts partners' or schools' arts spaces.**
- 3.1 If creating a high-quality arts studio space is not an option, make minor renovations and modifications to existing spaces to make them more welcoming and artistically inspiring.**  
Ensure spaces meet safety requirements for the art form.


### **APPROACH 3.1:** Invest in high-quality arts studios in one or more sites and provide opportunities for youth across sites to access these spaces.

**Takeaway:** Creating a limited number of quality arts studios in “hub” sites creates opportunities for some youth to have regular access to high-quality spaces while also creating opportunities for other youth across sites to have occasional access to these spaces. However, transporting youth to a geographically distant “hub” location during the short window of afterschool programming is often not feasible. This approach shows more promise for summer programming.

Three of the five organizations created high-quality studios, called “hubs,” in one or more sites which were available daily for youth at those locations and intended for use by other youth participating in the arts throughout the network who did not have high-quality spaces at their own sites. While three organizations created these hub spaces, only two opened them to other sites as intended. One organization opened its hub site to other youth from other sites in the summer, and the second organization transported youth to the hub site after school. The third organization had not developed the systems for bringing youth from other sites to the hub site prior to the pandemic and decided not to pursue this strategy once the pandemic started.

**The creation of these spaces, even if only in one site, demonstrated an organizational commitment to and valuing of the arts that could attract more resources for arts programming.** For example, one organization created a hub site for digital arts programming. This digital arts studio offered all the equipment needed for music production, film production, animation, and graphic design, and included artwork displays and a place where youth could just relax. Youth from multiple arts programs across this organization’s sites, who typically participated in the organization’s arts programs in school classrooms after school, could access the hub as part of summer programming.

Organizations that implemented this approach were able to offer youth from sites without high-quality arts space access to higher-quality space even if their “home” site did not have it. For instance, one organization that provided classes at a site located in a public housing development used a general education room for their theater program. Youth who attended that program were also offered the additional opportunity to travel to the hub site twice a week to engage in visual arts or performing arts classes. Many, but not all, youth were excited to travel to a new site to take arts classes. Those who were excited described the hub as “awesome,” “a dream,” and said that it “has everything.”

 **The hub site is “awesome,” “a dream,” and “has everything.”**

[Youth participants]

**Caregivers and other organization and site staff had concerns about this approach for afterschool.** Transporting youth to hub sites after school sometimes interfered with caregivers’ pick-up times for their children, and some had concerns about their children traveling to other sites with which they were unfamiliar. Transporting youth to other sites also required additional resources, like staff time for driving and monitoring youth at the other sites, which resulted in staffing shortages at the “home” site. For this reason, one of the two organizations that implemented a hub model discontinued the model for school year programming but hoped to revisit it during summer programming.

### **Considerations for Investing in High-Quality Arts Studios in One or More Sites for Youth from Other Sites to Access**

- **If considering transporting youth from one site to another, carefully assess how much time is available and when the approach might work best.** One downside of this approach was that transporting youth to a location that was not close to the site used up time otherwise available for programming and left less time for skill development, making it hard for teaching artists to hold high expectations for youth. Having youth attend YAI programming in a central site when there is more time available (e.g., summer, weekends) may ameliorate these concerns.
- **Consider the resource tradeoffs of this approach.** While creating one or more central arts hubs may initially reduce the investment in space (and possibly equipment) that is needed to create higher-quality arts programs, in the long run it may be offset by the costs of getting youth from site to site and/or the staff time needed to oversee the process.
- **Ensure caregivers understand why program attendance is important so they are comfortable with coordinating their pickup times with the program.** Previous research on YAI demonstrated that at the start of the initiative, caregivers didn’t fully understand how YAI was different from other drop-in programs at the site. Therefore, they didn’t prioritize their child’s attendance (e.g., they would pick youth up in the middle of YAI class for doctor’s appointments they had scheduled or for other reasons). Once they saw their child’s artwork or a performance, they reported that they then understood the program was designed to teach art skills and were more invested in their child’s attendance. When youth are transported to another site, caregiver buy-in is even more important as youth will be off-site, and caregivers may not be able to pick youth up at times that are most convenient for them.



## APPROACH 3.2:

### Make use of neighborhood community arts partners' or schools' arts spaces.

**Takeaway:** Holding arts classes in an existing, geographically close high-quality arts space may be promising for 1) sites that have a community arts partner that is in very close proximity to the site 2) school-based sites that have existing visual arts rooms or other high-quality arts studio spaces.

Rather than create their own high-quality spaces, two organizations were able to identify existing high-quality spaces that were easily accessible to the afterschool sites (more accessible than hub sites described above, e.g., within a five-minute drive or in the same building as their programs) and arranged to use these spaces for their arts programs. One of the five organizations experimented with using a community partner's space for YAI programming. They transported visual arts participants to a nearby community partner's visual arts space for arts classes. This space was a true visual arts studio where teaching artists could implement all types of projects to develop youth's artistic skills. The community partner did not place restrictions on what the teaching artist could teach, there was a sink and storage for projects, and youth were allowed to make a mess (e.g., it was not a problem if they got paint on the floors). In another organization, a school site had an existing classroom that was used to teach digital music to students during the school day. When the digital arts program was introduced in the site, it used the same digital music room to teach the site's digital music classes to youth who attended the afterschool program. School sites also often offered access to a visual arts classroom which would have sinks, art tables, storage space, and appropriate ventilation for conducting high-quality visual arts programming.

Organizations that were able to identify existing, geographically convenient high-quality arts spaces experienced the benefits of those spaces without some of the challenges encountered with a hub model. For example, because the community arts partner was close to the site, there was enough time for teaching artists to teach youth skills, even during the afterschool hours. In addition, the site's teaching artist accompanied youth to the location and taught the class using the community partner space. Additionally, the community partner provided the equipment needed for the class and storage for materials (such as paints and brushes) and in-process artwork. The teaching artist's connection to the site ensured a continuity of relationships for the youth which may not have existed if the teaching artist worked for the community partner organization.

### Considerations for Using Geographically Close Community Arts Partners' or Schools' Arts Spaces

- **Consider the resources required for this approach.** This model requires oversight by staff to get youth from the site to the community partner's location safely. If it is possible to escort youth to the community partner's location on foot, staff time may be the only consideration; however, in other cases, programs may need a van or bus.
- **This approach may not elevate the organization's recognition as an arts provider.** Previous research on YAI showed that investment in art studios was a visible manifestation of the organization's commitment to the arts which engaged community stakeholders in the program and elevated the overall perceived value of the arts within the organization. If the art studio space is off-site, the organization has less visible in-house demonstration of their commitment to the arts for youth and families, other staff, and potential community partners and donors.



### APPROACH 3.3:

If creating an art studio is not an option, consider making minor modifications to make existing spaces more welcoming and artistically inspiring.

**Takeaway:** Minor space modifications can make existing art or multipurpose spaces more welcoming and functional for art skill development at a lower cost. Modifications should also prioritize physical and emotional safety considerations for the art form.

The quality principles suggest that arts spaces should be welcoming and arts-affirming. All five organizations opted to make minor modifications to make some multipurpose spaces more welcoming and inspiring and to better facilitate the teaching of the art form. Some common renovations included adding art to the walls, brightly painting walls, and adding comfortable lounging spaces. In some cases, youth were consulted about these modifications, for instance choosing the color of the walls. One organization that ran its arts programs in its school locations was not able to paint the walls or make permanent changes to the building, but they purchased program “swag” that could be put up during the program and taken down when they left. This swag “branded” the space for that arts program and included program banners and mouse pads.

**Space modifications made youth feel appreciated and excited about the art form.** Youth were interested and engaged in some arts classes even if they were not taught in a high-quality arts space. A majority of participants from Spring 2019 to March 2020 chose to participate in the organizations’ arts classes even when the room was not designed for the art form. Many of the things that youth appreciated most about or desired in their arts spaces were cosmetic factors. For instance, youth expressed appreciation for arts spaces with art on the walls and described them as “beautiful,” “creative,” and “inspiring.” Youth also appreciated brightly painted rooms and comfortable spaces, and when these touches were not in place, youth wished they were. Participants from one visual arts class in a site that made modifications to a space shared what they liked about it:

**I saw that the room had a lot of details, a lot of colors. [The room was] popping out with different details, and it was very, very awesome.**

**[Youth participant]**

*Participant 1: I saw that the room had a lot of details, a lot of colors. [The room was] popping out with different details, and it was very, very awesome.*

*Participant 2: What I liked about the classroom upstairs was that it was very artistic, [there are] murals [on the walls]. It inspired me to do art, and so I try to mimic [what’s on the walls].*

Having artwork displayed helped to create a culture of inspiration where youth felt safe being creative. Some young people shared that they would appreciate having their own artwork on the walls so they could see how their skills were progressing over time. Importantly, young people were frustrated when they were asked for input into the space design and their suggestions were not implemented.

**While these modifications made the spaces more welcoming, in some cases, the spaces were still perceived as inadequate by youth and teaching artists.** Youth preferred when spaces were light and had adequate airflow and a good temperature, and when they had enough space. Teaching artists shared that some spaces were too small; lacked storage, sinks, or space to place drying art pieces; and did not have the proper safety equipment or conditions in place. For instance, ventilation is vital to maintaining a healthy workspace in the visual arts.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, sprung floors and mats were important for practicing

<sup>21</sup> To prevent chemical exposure and possible fire when working with some materials, an open door or window, air-conditioning unit, or a ceiling fan to circulate air is insufficient. The best practice is strong cross ventilation (e.g., two windows open and powerful fans to push air in and out) or exhaust vents.

dance safely. Further, when modifications or renovations did not address privacy, teaching artists and youth expressed concern over participants' ability to be creative without being judged or interrupted by other youth in the site. Teaching artists did what they could within the organizations' rules and the space they were in to maximize privacy (e.g., moving to the corner of a multipurpose space, placing stations out of direct sight of the room's windows, adding curtains to windows) so that youth felt comfortable trying new things.

**While modified multipurpose spaces were more welcoming, they were shared with other arts programs or other types of programming, which limited emotional safety and skill development.**

High-quality spaces are dedicated to the art form but given resource and other constraints on space, most arts programming spaces in all five organizations were shared with other sites or school programs. Teaching artists in shared spaces had less preparation time to set up arts activities before programming began, which could limit the types of projects they could do in class, particularly for visual arts. Visual arts classes held in shared spaces also had to forgo projects that require in-process drying time.

As has been documented in other research,<sup>22</sup> youth who experienced interruptions during arts classes from young people not participating (e.g., knocking on the door, peeking in windows that were uncovered) described feeling less emotionally safe. Young people in this study felt similarly, and reported they were less able to concentrate on being creative in spaces that were shared by other programs or open to traffic during the program. As one teaching artist explained:

*Another thing that we're up against here, I don't like the space that they got us in. I don't like where they got us here, at all. We're an open loft space...So, at any given moment, there's a kid walking by, staring at them. And you know, when their peers show up, sometimes they withdraw. Or if a kid decides to be goofy, he's yelling something, like "Be quiet!" So, I hate the space they have us in now. The space, the open space, can make class more challenging. It can make it more challenging to get them to open up and be free. Because they feel like people outside of the drama club are walking by looking at them...*

**The space, the open space, can make class more challenging. It can make it more challenging to get them to open up and be free. Because they feel like people outside of the drama club are walking by looking at them...**

**[Teaching artist]**

**Considerations for Making Minor Modifications to Multipurpose Spaces When Creating an Arts Studio was Not an Option**

- **Making minor modifications to spaces may support youth interest and engagement in the art form.** However, if spaces are not fully functional for the art form, art skill development can be limited by safety or other considerations. If spaces are shared, consider ways in which in-process artwork could be left out so as not to limit what young people can learn and do in the program.
- **Consider gathering youth input into space renovations.** Youth input is a quality principle, and youth appreciated being consulted in the layout or decoration of the arts spaces.
- **When selecting spaces for arts programming, consider youth's emotional safety concerns.** Adolescents are naturally self-conscious and taking risks in arts programming requires a degree of separation and privacy from peers not in arts programming.

<sup>22</sup> McClanahan & Hartmann (2017).

## Encore Conclusions

Multipurpose OST organizations have the potential to broadly expand access to higher-quality arts programming for youth from under-resourced communities that have been economically and socially marginalized and spark the artistic passions and voice of more young people. **Early data from this study suggests that multipurpose OST organizations can create an infrastructure that will elevate the quality of their arts programming at a cost that is sustainable and enables replication across multiple sites.** By increasing the quality of their arts programming, the five OST organizations in this study created more opportunities for young people to create original artwork, develop artistic skills, and have opportunities to share high-quality work in public spaces. Leaders of the five organizations were convinced that the higher-quality arts programs created through YAI were an essential component of their youth development toolkit. Their arts programs reached young people that other types of programming could not reach—a finding that also emerged in previous research on the YAI initiative. And arts programs were perceived to help their organizations support youth with their social and emotional well-being—an important goal to consider as communities emerge from the pandemic.

The organizations adapted the 10 quality principles in ways that early data suggests worked for their funding context and resulted in higher-quality arts programming and youth engagement in the arts. Lessons generated by the efforts of the five multipurpose OST organizations examined in this study offer guidance for other OST organizational leaders about how to improve the quality of arts programming in a sustainable manner, for youth who may not otherwise have access to high-quality arts experiences. While the lessons are drawn from early implementation experiences, they provide a preliminary roadmap for multipurpose OST organizations seeking to increase the quality of their arts programming, which can continue to be tested, developed, and refined.

The early lessons shared in this report can move the OST field forward in increasing access to high-quality arts programming in the following ways:

- 1) **Identifying where and why multipurpose OST organizations need to invest to create a sustainable and scalable infrastructure for high-quality arts programming.** While there are 10 principles that define high-quality arts programming, three of these principles—content specialists to staff the program, current and high-quality equipment and materials, and welcoming, dedicated arts studio spaces—require an investment that may be greater than the amount multipurpose OST organizations currently invest in arts programming. However, this investment may be parallel to what multipurpose OST programs invest in other programming areas that require content experts, specialized equipment, and space, such as academic, sports, or STEM programming. The investment in a high-quality arts infrastructure will yield benefits for young people, including opportunities to develop their artistic voice, skills, and identity; share and be publicly recognized for their artistic work; be mentored by artists who can model a career path in the arts; and pursue or develop a motivating spark in the arts.
- 2) **Elevating the importance of teaching artists as the essential infrastructure element and offering promising approaches to employing them in a multipurpose OST organization.** Teaching artists emerged as the most important element of the infrastructure for high-quality arts programming. A skilled teaching artist could mentor young people and help develop their

artistic voice and skills even when the other infrastructure elements such as materials and equipment or space were not available or ideal. In addition, skilled teaching artists were a magnet for young people and often compelling spokespeople for their programs within the organization and the broader community. Teaching artists with a range of professional experiences (spanning from newly out of college through advanced professionals) could implement high-quality programming if they had, or were supported in developing, youth development skills. While teaching artists required higher wages than other frontline OST staff, their content expertise helped to justify these wages and organizations were able to make the most of this investment by deploying them at two locations. However, teaching artists could not implement high-quality arts programming in isolation and needed organizational support, particularly if they were shared across two sites.

While teaching artists were compensated more than other frontline staff, their compensation remained modest, given the low wages that characterize the OST field. More experienced artists were not satisfied with their compensation. The staffing and compensation landscape in the OST field has shifted dramatically since our wage data was collected and these dynamics have likely intensified. It will be important for organizational leaders that hire teaching artists to consider broader community wage scales and living wage standards in determining compensation.

- 3) **Highlighting art form differences that have implications for sustainability, scalability, and youth engagement.** Beyond a skilled teaching artist, art forms varied in the infrastructure investments that were needed.
- Digital arts required significant investment in computers and software which necessitated ongoing maintenance and upgrading but had no unique space needs, though some digital music programs created a sound booth.
  - Visual arts required ongoing purchase of consumable materials and required spaces with good ventilation, sinks, and storage. Many schools and OST organizations had existing visual arts rooms that could be used for programming, though not all these spaces had appropriate ventilation or sinks.
  - Performing arts programs had mixed equipment needs depending on the specific art form. Dance programs could be offered with less investment in materials and equipment than visual and digital arts. However, dance programming had more significant space needs such as sprung floors for dance programming to protect young dancers' legs. Theater, on the other hand, appeared to require more investment in materials (props and costumes) to interest youth in the art form which was less familiar to many. It also required access to sound equipment and a stage.

Youth interest in and familiarity with an art form is also an important consideration in determining how much to invest in equipment, supplies, or space. For art forms that are less familiar to youth, investment in space, equipment, or materials might be necessary “hooks” to encourage young people’s exploration of and engagement in the art form. Conversely, significant investment in materials and equipment may not guarantee youth interest, and interests may change over time as new youth enter the program. The 10 principles of quality arts programming call for youth input to be solicited throughout program development, and organizations should remain nimble to respond to changing interests.

- 4) **Shedding light on the ways in which community arts organizations and multipurpose OST organizations can partner to expand access to quality arts programs.** Each of the five organizations developed partnerships with community arts organizations to support their arts programming. Their experiences showed that these partnerships can be leveraged to expand

the capacity of multipurpose OST organizations to deliver high-quality arts programming. Community arts partners hired and supported teaching artists, developed program curricula, supported and hosted culminating events, donated visual art supplies, and made studio spaces available for programming. However, the research also highlighted some challenges with this approach. When teaching artists from community arts organizations were delivering programming in multipurpose OST sites, they needed to develop strong connections with staff and youth within those sites to garner the visibility and support needed to make their programs successful. They also needed to learn to work within the culture of multipurpose OST drop-in programs where youth have some freedom to choose their activities. In this setting, responsiveness to youth interests is particularly important. In multipurpose OST programs many youth may be beginners in the art form; therefore, easy access points should be developed so youth can gain some momentum to motivate them to advance.

- 5) **Highlighting the biggest challenge to high-quality arts programming—access to high-quality arts studio space.** One central infrastructure element—dedicated arts studio space—was not a scalable element of arts program infrastructure both because of cost and because programs took place in buildings (schools or public housing facilities) which the OST provider organization did not control. Organizations were able to create one or two high-quality studio spaces in their network or use existing arts studio spaces in their own facilities, schools, or nearby community arts organizations. But not all youth had access to these spaces on a regular basis and often, teaching artists had to modify programming to work with the space available. This meant limiting the types of artistic skills youth could be taught. While some elements of high-quality programming were implemented in less-than-ideal spaces and youth did learn artistic skills in spaces that were not high-quality, their experiences were not equal to those of their peers who had access to higher-quality spaces. So, while organizations can develop and implement high-quality arts programs without arts studio spaces, leaders should try to mitigate tradeoffs by identifying high-quality community arts spaces that could be used at least occasionally, by working with schools or recreation facilities that offer higher-quality spaces, and by advocating for funding to create arts studios in as many locations as possible.

While the lessons shared in this report offer suggestions for creating the infrastructure for high-quality arts programming in a more affordable manner, creating this infrastructure still requires resources. Some of the approaches described here, such as hiring teaching artists, still require a greater investment of resources than would be typical for a multipurpose OST program. High-quality programming, regardless of program areas, is necessarily more expensive than programming that is of lower quality. Executive commitment to the arts, one of the quality principles, is required to ensure that an elevation in the arts program quality happens and is sustained.

In addition, while multipurpose OST organizations can elevate the quality of their arts programming in a meaningful way, the quality they can provide on a broad scale will likely not be equivalent to the quality of arts programming that can be offered on a smaller scale, such as in a community arts organization. Scaling high-quality arts programming faces structural barriers, including the space limitations of schools and other public facilities where multipurpose OST organizations operate as well as fundamental resource constraints of the multipurpose OST field. While the YAI initiative provides a model for increasing access to *higher*-quality arts programs, it was unclear if it would be able to achieve at scale the quality of arts programming offered in a single site by a community arts organization. Nonetheless, the findings shared in this report can be used by organizational leaders to make the case to funders and donors that initial investments in a high-quality arts program infrastructure is needed and that those investments will expand access and equity in arts programming for youth.

# APPENDIX

## Research Methods

This study is based on the experiences of five multipurpose OST organizations (Boys & Girls Clubs) that implemented YAI from January 2019 to June 2021. These organizations launched YAI in Spring 2019 in just a few sites to develop, refine, and test YAI's implementation on a small scale. In Fall 2019, the five organizations began implementing YAI in more sites. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the development of the organizations' YAI programs, which had implications for this study. While the study includes data from over 30 months of YAI's implementation from January 2019 through June 2021 (including 15 months of data on YAI's implementation before the pandemic and 15 months of data on YAI's implementation during the pandemic), the research was not able to observe the full arc of program development under typical conditions. The lessons shared in this report draw on multiple sources of data collected during those two timeframes.

Table A-1: Data Sources

Type of Data	Pre-Pandemic, During-Pandemic, or Both	2019	2020	2021
Quarterly phone interviews with YAI managers, BGCA, and The Wallace Foundation	Both	26	14	5
In-person interviews with teaching artists and youth development specialists who ran YAI classes	Pre-Pandemic	19	37	0
In-person interviews with organization leaders, site leaders, other staff, and partners	Pre-Pandemic	69	70	0
In-person structured YAI program observations	Pre-Pandemic	17	25	0
In-person focus groups with YAI participants/# of participants	Pre-Pandemic	22/115	21/98	n/a
In-person focus groups or interviews with caregivers of YAI participants/# of participants	Pre-Pandemic	0	23/46	0
Virtual focus groups with YAI participants who had participated in YAI both before and during the pandemic/# of participants	During-Pandemic	0	0	10/31
Virtual interviews with teaching artists and youth development specialists that ran YAI classes	During-Pandemic	0	21	16
Virtual interviews with BGC leaders	During-Pandemic	0	9	17
Staffing and program costs from BGC's financial and staffing records	Pre-Pandemic*	X	X	n/a
Review of organizations' plans and reports submitted as part of their grant requirements	Both	X	X	X
Individual-level YAI and Club participation data from the organizations' attendance records	Pre-Pandemic**	X	X	n/a

\*Staffing costs (e.g., information on staff salaries) and benefits were submitted using templates provided by the researchers in Summer 2019 and March 2020. Staff time spent on YAI was gathered during interviews.

\*\*YAI and Club participation data were submitted using templates provided by the researchers in Summer 2019, January 2020, and March 2020.

## Instrument Development

**Interview protocols:** Interview protocols were developed using the research questions and the analytic framework of the 10 quality principles and were also informed by prior research on YAI. The researchers created a matrix of topic areas to ensure all key areas were addressed by protocols and not duplicative.

**YAI observation rubric:** The researchers developed an observation rubric based on the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) and the Arts Program Quality Assessment (APQA).<sup>23</sup> The team aligned YPQA and APQA quality indicators to the 10 Principles for Success and modified items as needed to ensure alignment. The research team then drafted new indicators for principles or components of the principles that the YPQA or APQA did not cover. The observation rubric was piloted in research on a previous set of YAI programs and refined through its use over multiple rounds of data collection. The tool has a total of 10 categories representing the observable quality principles. Each category has between one and 12 indicators. Observers rate programs on these indicators giving them a one, three, or a five depending on the extent to which the quality element is present.

## Data Collection

**Interviews:** The majority of interviews conducted in this study were conducted during week-long site visits in 2019 and 2020 and were conducted individually. Interviews were led by various members of the research team, most often with two interviewers present. Interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Quarterly calls were conducted by phone in 2019 and early 2020 and then by video call after March of 2020. All teaching artist and staff interviews after March of 2020 were conducted virtually.

**Youth focus groups:** YAI participants were invited by site staff to participate in a focus group when researchers were onsite. Site staff were instructed to invite all YAI participants to participate and select youth for the focus group on a first-come basis once parental consent was obtained. Staff were asked to leave the room when the focus group was conducted. Youth received pizza for participating in the focus groups. Most focus groups were conducted by two researchers.

In 2021, the research team conducted virtual youth focus groups. Site staff helped to recruit and organize participants for a virtual focus group, most of which took place on site. A few focus groups, however, were with youth who participated virtually from their homes. In both cases, researchers could not ensure that staff or parents were not in the room as youth answered focus group questions.

Some regular YAI participants may have participated in focus groups each of the three years they were conducted. Focus groups were recorded and transcribed.

**Caregiver focus groups:** Caregivers of YAI participants were asked to participate in a 30-minute focus group when they came to pick up their child at the site. Site staff recruited volunteers and they were compensated \$10 for their participation. Interviews took place in a private space at the site. Caregiver interviews were conducted in spring of 2020 in four of five sites. Focus groups were recorded and transcribed.

**Observations:** Research teams observed at least one program taught by most teaching artists employed in the initiative in each of our site visits. Research teams also observed some YAI programs taught by youth development professionals in 2019 but did not observe these programs in 2020. In 2019, teams of two researchers conducted each observation. In 2020, the majority of observations were conducted in teams of two though experienced observers conducted some observations alone to facilitate scheduling. Each observation lasted for the entire program session, which ranged from one to two hours. Observers

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<sup>23</sup> Forum for Youth Investment, Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality



took field notes during the observation capturing teacher and youth interactions. Each observer scored the observation as soon as possible following the program, and observers met to compare scores and come to consensus on items where they differed.

**Participation and background data:** Participation data for both YAI and the site was gathered from January 2019 to March 16th, 2020 (excluding the summer months) by the sites and submitted to the research team using templates provided by the research team. Over the course of this time, the program expanded to additional sites. For instance, in Spring 2019, one organization had YAI programming in two sites but in Fall 2019 expanded to five. Youth under 10 years old, and those without a valid date of birth or age data were excluded. Background data, including sex, age/date of birth, race/ethnicity, and eligibility for free/reduced price lunch, was gathered from all sites using a template provided by the research team.

**Cost data:** The sites provided the research team with data on YAI costs, including costs of renovations, equipment, materials, field trips, food, and other program expenses as well as data on salaries (loaded) or wages of YAI staff, including teaching artists, youth development staff members who worked on YAI, and site and organizational leaders. During one-on-one interviews with YAI staff, researchers asked a series of questions on how much time the staff member spent on YAI during specified time periods, which was used to extrapolate over the entire school year.

## Analysis

**Interviews:** This qualitative data was analyzed in several stages. While on site, the research team compiled top-of-mind themes based on the interviews that had been conducted and delivered a verbal debrief to all organization staff who participated in the interviews and were invited by organizational leadership, able to attend, and interested in attending. This enabled staff to add more information or correct any interpretations. The research team then drafted exit memos summarizing what they had verbally shared onsite, and these memos were shared back with the organizations, again providing an opportunity for feedback or questions.

Next, researchers coded and thematically analyzed data from interview transcripts. To prepare transcripts for coding, researchers lightly cleaned them and uploaded them to Dedoose, a qualitative analysis software program. The research team developed a list of codes to apply to data; codes were closely aligned to research questions, the analytic framework of the 10 Principles for Success, as well as prior research on YAI and were informed by early themes researchers heard emerging in interviews.

In each year of the study, researchers coded sample transcripts and then met to refine codes and code definitions and ensure inter-rater reliability. While codes remained largely the same over the course of the study, they were examined and modified each year of the study as new themes emerged. Once all transcripts were coded, data was exported by individual code. Researchers conducted analysis through a structured, two-stage memo-writing process for each code. Memos presented strong findings (i.e., findings coming up consistently and which could be triangulated by other respondents) within thematic areas while also addressing variation in the data by organization, as well as contradictions and nuances in data. Findings underwent an internal quality assurance process focused on protecting participants' confidentiality.

To develop this final report, cross-year, cross-topic, and cross-organization analytic memos were developed that summarized the findings across all data collection periods. This data was supplemented by the descriptive analysis conducted with participation and enrollment data as well as cost data.

**Observational data:** Observation scores were entered in an Excel spreadsheet and modal scores by quality area were calculated to show whether a principle was observed at low, medium, or high levels during the class. The 2020 observation scores were used to descriptively examine differences between

early career teaching artists and professional practicing teaching artists in quality areas. 2020 scores were used because that was the second year of implementation. 2019 site visits took place when many teaching artists were new in their roles.

**Participation and background data:** Participation data was cleaned and analyzed descriptively to compare recruitment, attendance, and retention across organization, art form, and infrastructure elements (e.g., type of equipment/materials, teaching artist, space). The background characteristics of YAI participants were compared to those of the population of youth 10 and over who attended the site for any program.

**Cost data:** Program cost data were categorized and aggregated into spending categories (e.g., materials/supplies, equipment, space renovations, training, contracted staffing, etc.) by year to assess which categories of spending were highest during various programming periods. Hourly wages were assessed for teaching artists by category (e.g., experienced teaching artists, early career teaching artists, and youth development specialists).

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