

Community Arts Project
Kingston Youth Arts Cooperative
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After researching local arts initiatives we came across the *Kingston Youth Arts Cooperative* (KYAC). We discovered that a fellow teacher candidate in the IS Music Class (Caitlin Barton) has been working with this organization for the past four years and knew that we could gain some firsthand insight into this group. We decided to learn more about KYAC, due to our shared interest in music, drama and fine arts, in hopes of one day implementing similar programs in our own communities.

Initial Research/Findings

Website

After navigating the *Kingston Community Arts Cooperative* website we learned that KYAC is a non-profit organization and is described as a “grass roots volunteer” initiative. They offer free arts programming for local children ages 6 to 18 and their core belief is, “...that all children deserve an opportunity to participate in the performing arts and explore its wonders.” Classes are offered in Drama, Fine Arts/Set Design, Hooping, Stomp Percussion, Circus Arts, Taekwondo, LegoRobotics and Voice. Each class is divided into age groups and has a maximum enrollment capacity. Programming occurs on Wednesday evenings from 4:00pm-8:00pm throughout the school year and during the summer in a one-week day camp. The program operates out of Crossroads United Church and at the end of the year there is a final theatrical production at the Grand Theatre.

KYAC also has a community outreach program where instructors visit local elementary schools to provide workshops. Many of these schools have minimal arts programming, and the goal of the KYAC staff is to supplement arts instruction in the areas of music, dance, drama and visual arts. The founder of KYAC is Mary Greenspan and the majority of the instructors are Queen’s University students. The program also includes counselors, many of whom are enrolled in the high school Drama Cooperative Program.

The program relies on local partners such as musicians, artists, businesses, organizations, and volunteers to function. Parents and guardians of the students are asked to donate twelve hours of their time throughout the year, or to make a cash donation to ensure the program is able to run. Volunteers are what make the program successful and there are volunteer opportunities at the K-ROCK Centre, by providing transportation of instructors to and from KYAC, serving dinners on Wednesday nights, and by working on sets, costumes and others aspects of KYAC’s final production. In addition to volunteering at least twelve hours at KYAC, parents and guardians must participate in one large fundraising event per year and must sell six tickets to the final production. If they do not wish to volunteer, they can donate \$275.00 to ensure that the expenses of the program are covered. KYAC also has many local sponsors including *CREIT*

Management Limited, Family Fun Fair, Queen's University, Smallworld Media Group Inc., unicycle.com, Crossroads United Church, K-Rock Centre, SMG, Uxbridge Taekwondo Academy, and Bradley Photo.

Observations

We visited KYAC at Crossroads United Church on Wednesday January 18th to observe their regular scheduled programming. When we first entered, dinner was being served to some of the students and counselors. We learned that there is a dinner program implemented for students at the cost of twenty-five dollars a month- since programming runs through dinnertime. Meals are prepared by both the founder and parent volunteers. We were greeted with warm smiles and were offered a delicious meal.

Upon our arrival, Caitlin Barton met with us and proceeded to officially introduce us to KYAC's founder, Mary Greenspan. Afterwards we took a tour of the facility to see where all of the classes take place. We started in the gymnasium where the Hooping class had just finished. This vast open space is where the larger and more interactive programs, such as Circus Arts and Drama, take place. We passed costumes and hoops scattered on the floor and were directed towards some of the storage spaces for KYAC, which included space under and behind the stage. At this point we were introduced to one of the students from Caitlin's Music class. She followed us for the remainder of our tour and filled in any details of the program that she felt Caitlin left out.

We continued into the Choir rehearsal room where the Vocal classes take place. As we passed down the hall, we stopped at a small corridor where Caitlin had once taught her Music classes. This room would have been very difficult to instruct in since it was no larger than a janitor's closet. Taekwondo classes are held in the entrance space to the chapel and the Visual Arts classes take place at a table in the front lobby. Our tour ended in the Nursery where the Music classes are now taught.

At this point the students were gathered from dinner for the next scheduled classes- this took quite some time. Caitlin assured us that slow transitions were not frequent, however scheduling was delayed on this particular evening because there was going to be a performance for parents. Preparation for the performance was more significant than promptness for scheduled classes at this point. The performance was initially scheduled before Christmas but due to unforeseen circumstances, it had been postponed.

As we waited for the class to begin, Caitlin allowed us to peruse the script that Mary had written for their final production. We inquired about the casting process and were informed that each student selects their top twelve character choices, the instructors then go through all of the choices and each student receives one of their top four roles. Students for the music class began to filter in with their remaining desserts and set up the room for their *STOMP* rehearsal. Their

materials consisted of broomsticks (from Canadian Tire), small dowels, a prayer-bowl (from the OMEA Conference), drum sticks and a gankoqui bell.

The five students in the percussion class ranged from grades 2-7 and there was also an assistant counselor from the high school co-operative program. Together, they formulated a schedule of how they planned to utilize their time before the performance. They decided to rehearse their *STOMP* piece first to ensure it was performance-ready. After their rehearsal we ventured back out to the gymnasium to interview Mary Greenspan (see Interview-Mary). As we conducted the interview, we also observed students practicing on their unicycles in the gymnasium for the Circus Arts class.

Once we had gathered enough information from the founder, we stopped by the Taekwondo class. Judging by the serious atmosphere, we gathered that students knew they had signed up for a very disciplined art form and listened intently as the instructor ran drills with them. As we prepared to leave KYAC many students were coming together for the final (and most popular) class of the night - Drama. Some parent volunteers cleaned up in the kitchen as others finished final details on costumes.

Interview with Caitlin Barton

After learning that our fellow classmate, Caitlin Barton, has been heavily involved with KYAC for a number of years, we sat down and conducted an interview to learn more about the organization. She gave us great insight, providing a personal account of her experiences with KYAC. Attached is a summary of our findings. The complete interview can be acquired in MP3 format via email.

Question: How did you become a member of KYAC?

Caitlin: I was in second year and a posting came up on Kijiji. I was looking for a tutoring position- I wasn't expecting to find anything in Music. All of a sudden it said "bucket drumming instructor wanted". I had just done a bucket drumming workshop with Queen's Music and I thought, "I can probably do that". I went to the interview and it was crazy and I thought that this was something I wanted to do. I got hired on that summer and I started as a music instructor and general supervisor for their one week summer program and I have been there ever since.

Q: What is your overall perspective and opinion of the program?

C: I love it because it's offering something that most of these kids wouldn't be able to get. Unfortunately the arts are an elitist thing and if your parents don't have money then you

can't go. KYAC works on volunteer hours, your parents can either pay around \$200 for the entire term or they can work a specific number of hours. It's usually activities like selling drinks at the K-ROCK centre, doing a bottle drive, or driving instructors too and from the program. If you do these hours then your kid can go for free. So a lot of our kids are from lower socio-economic statuses and that is who the program is designed for. But some of the kids are upper to middle class, so there is this huge dynamic there and when everyone gets there, they just see one another as equal.

Q: What is the most meaningful thing about the program for you?

C: I think it is that they are just open to anything. When I got hired on to do bucket drumming, in the interview, they said if I wanted to go a different route and not do bucket drumming, that's fine. I would come up with totally crazy ideas, saying, "Hey we should get boomwhackers," and then Mary just goes, "Great, that's a great idea." The next week she had purchased twenty-five sets of boomwhackers. And she said, "Don't worry, I'll just work a couple of extra hours and we'll be able to pay for them." So there is a lot of freedom and you can come up with crazy ideas and she supports almost anything. Another time a kid came up to us and asked if there was a character in the play who could carry a giant staff, and we were like, "No, but now there is!" Nobody is egocentric, there is no one saying, "No, this is how we're going to do it." Everyone is open minded and you have the freedom to do whatever you want.

Q: How are your interactions with Mary as the chair of the organization?

C: It's not really like the typical boss relationship. Most of our correspondence is through email, just because she is so busy and she needs stuff written down. Usually she will send out a weekly update to everyone that outlines everything that is happening this week. Throughout the week she'll send us YouTube videos saying, "Hey, look at this, it's hilarious." So it's almost like we're friends. I'll show up a half an hour before my program starts and I'll help her make dinner. They offer a dinner program, which is good because a lot of the kids come straight from school. We'll do that and hang out and chat. She supports my crazy ideas and I support her crazy ideas.

Q: What are the goals of the program?

C: Accessibility. Just letting these kids do something arts based because many of them can't. Then I would say a sense of belonging. They show up and they are different ages, with different backgrounds, and they can all hang out and have fun together. It is also theatrical instruction. They all work towards a play at the end of the year, so we work on getting them into that zone. Being able to sit backstage for forty-five minutes and then going on to deliver your three lines is really hard when you are little or have ADHD, to sit still for that long and to not talk. I think it is important for these kids to have that goal.

Q: How are these goals being met?

C: I think with the support of the parents. The parents make all of the costumes, they come during the drama program and cut out costumes and they paint sets. So if they weren't there, I don't think the program would be able to exist. Some of them work at the K-ROCK centre and sell popcorn and beer and the money they make goes towards buying supplies. You have to be a registered not for profit organization and the K-ROCK centre will give you a bit of money so they don't have to pay full time employees. So they're winning and we're winning. We also did a bottle drive at the beginning of this year and that was successful. Again, the parents volunteered their cars.

Q: What activities do you offer?

C: We do a summer program which is basically everything. There is Circus Arts, which is unicycling. We had a tight rope last year but we didn't feel safe with it. They also do juggling. There is LegoRobotics which we got a grant from Queen's to do. Mary's husband is actually the Dean of Computer Engineering at Queen's. We've put this into the play before, like this year it is about aliens so I'm sure we'll put it in. I'm doing music this year and we are doing a Stomp thing, so we have broomsticks, weird auxiliary percussion, body percussion and boomwhackers. This is the first year where they are also learning stick notation, usually we do everything by rote. For some of them it just doesn't work, they need to have something to look at to remind themselves. We use white pieces of felt with little black sticks that they put on it to make their rhythms. They each make a different one and they can do a poly-rhythm. We can do up to two bars of rhythmic dictation in four-four time and one girl is seven and she can do it. This is also the first year we have a vocal coach so there is a little choir. In the past Mary has not wanted to do musicals because there are a lot of people that don't like singing. A lot of times if you do a play at school, it's a musical, and if you want a big part then you have to sing, but there is so much other theatrical stuff. Mary writes the play herself so if one of the really talented people doesn't want to sing, but is really good at memorizing lines and has great stage presence, she can give them a leading role but not make them sing. It is really tailored to the kids. There is also the Drama program which is the biggest one.

Q: Is there a cap for how many programs the students can be in?

C: You can be in as many as you want, the only problem is scheduling. I think you can be in Art or Hooping, and if you do Hooping you can do Cartooning, but then you can't do Music because they are at the same time. But Drama is the stand alone thing and everyone is able to take it because it is the biggest program. All of the other programs are scheduled around it.

Q: You mentioned Visual Art, Cartooning and Hooping, are there any other programs?

C: Yeah, there is also Taekwondo, that's new this year. One of the instructors we hired last year to do Music, also has his black belt. We've done Fencing in the past and it was successful for sword fights in our pirate show. He said he could totally teach stage fighting, Mary said she loved it and that they were going to do it, and now it's on the schedule. We also do outreach into public schools, which is usually one of those programs but for a class.

Q: What activities could use more staffing?

C: It would really help if we could get people to come in and act as EA's almost, like work with one kid, particularly in LegoRobotics. I did it for a few weeks and know nothing about LegoRobotics. There are a couple kids that need that extra support. If they don't get it then they'll go and bother the other kids who are on task. But the problem is money, usually KYAC breaks even at the end of the year. All of the instructors get paid, but they are lucky if they don't finish in the hole. So hiring another person is not realistic. But the good thing is that Queen's offers their work study program, which means Queen's pays a portion of the instructors salaries. So almost everyone at KYAC is work study. You need to qualify through OSAP and cannot have won more than \$5000 in scholarships. So it means that KYAC only has to pay instructors \$2 an hour but they make \$12 because Queen's pays the rest.

Q: Who decides what programs run?

C: Mary decides based on numbers but also space. We are working out of a church by Loblaws, so they have a big gym that they can use for Circus Arts and Drama. They have a nursery and a music room and those are the only other two rooms. So Taekwondo takes place at the back of the chapel itself and the church said, "Sure, yeah, go ahead and use it." The church is so good to us, they are basically letting us take over. Programs run based on the scheduling, the space, the instructors and the kids.

Q: How do you think the program could improve and grow more?

C: I think it would be great if they could get their own space. It's kind of the goal right now, but it's probably not going to happen. Basically they need someone to donate a building. It would be great because everything gets carried back and forth to program every week because we only have limited storage under the stage. It has almost grown beyond the capacity that the church can offer.

Q: Has the city of Kingston ever stepped in to help out the organization?

C: Not that I am aware of. There are some community members who have made donations. One time Mary was talking to someone in the hospital and said that they were going to finish \$3000 in the hole because of their costumes. The lady felt bad and went to a hospital division to do a fundraiser and they donated \$2500 to KYAC, just like that. The church is

also starting to really promote us. They mentioned us at a bunch of their different functions so we have made money through that. They had a music night with Frontenac Community Band and admission was through donation and they donated \$900 to KYAC. I think if Mary had a Board of Directors that she worked with, they could have more fundraising events, but she doesn't like to give up that control.

Q: How many students are there in the program? Instructors?

C: I'm not sure exactly. Maybe around fifty. There are probably seven Drama instructors, then myself in Music, another person in singing... Probably ten instructors.

Q: How does your summer program compare to the regular program?

C: I think we should offer it twice, once at the beginning and once at the end of the summer. There are less kids, not everyone comes. I think they just pay for the cost of food so it is \$25 for the full week. You do summer camp stuff, you don't do the same stuff as the regular program. They've gone bowling, rock climbing and swimming. We get a grant for this program.

Q: What age group are the majority of your students?

C: Everyone seems to be in Grade 6-7. Everyone is between 10-12 years old. There is a good balance of boys and girls. There is some tension between some kids that attend the same schools.

Q: Where do you see your future with this program?

C: I would like to stay involved. I would like to stay in Kingston, I'm not sure if I want to continue being an instructor. The reason Mary likes the Queen's instructors is because kids relate to younger people. I want to give someone else the chance to be involved because I have gotten so much out of this experience.

Interview with Mary Greenspan

While visiting Caitlin Barton and observing the KYAC program, we conducted an informal interview with Mary Greenspan. The following is a summary of our conversation with Mary.

Mary Greenspan is the founder of Kingston Youth Arts Cooperative. She has a background in marketing, and was previously employed as a successful consultant for a computing software company. Her husband, Michael Greenspan, is the Department Head of the Electrical and Computer Engineering School of Computing at Queen's University and has provided KYAC with the resources for LegoRobotics – the *science meets ARTS* (smARTS)

program. Together, they continue to contribute to the success of KYAC.

With the dream to devise an arts outreach program for local elementary schools in the Kingston community, Mary, along with a team of teachers and parents raised \$10,000 through garage sales, bingos and local events seven years ago. When Mary finally set out to initiate arts programming within these schools, she received unexpected negative responses from administration and teachers. Mary discovered that the schools with an established arts program responded with apprehension and distaste to her arts initiative; they saw it as intrusive to the school environment, disrupting previously established routines and rhythms. Mary quickly understood that her initiative to implement arts programming was not only necessary, but welcomed in schools that were unable to provide sufficient arts programming. At the time, Mary's son was attending a school that did not offer arts programming – this was another incentive to provide arts outreach to schools in the community who could not otherwise afford lessons or fine arts instruction. These schools welcomed Mary's initiative. The outreach program was birthed from this experience.

KYAC relies on partnerships with local organizations to survive and thrive as a community arts organization. According to Mary, it takes \$20,000 to run the KYAC program each year. KYAC employs eleven instructors every year through partnership with the work-study program at Queen's University. This program pays the majority of the salary for up to five instructors. In addition, employing students from Queen's University is a win-win situation for KYAC and its instructors: participants of KYAC benefit from specialized instruction and instructors have an opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge to their teaching practice- as many of the instructors are members of the Faculty of Education.

At the end of each year, as part of a tradition, all members of KYAC participate in the Zombie Walk – a choreographed walk that takes place on Queen's University main campus. When asked, "Why do students participate in a Zombie Walk at the end of each year?" Mary replied, "I'm a zombie freak...it's been somewhat of a tradition." After watching a couple videos of this walk, we found the students quite convincing in their zombie roles, and we wondered if this theme is something that should be instilled into young people. It is an ethical question that should be addressed when youth from different backgrounds come to a non-profit organization for arts education (Greenspan, 2012). Mary said that one year she tried to change the idea of Zombie Walk into a Flash Mob idea, but the youth were hooked on the tradition.

At the end of KYAC's programming in late April, students put on a final production at the Grand Theatre in Kingston. Mary writes and directs the final production. This year the play, called, "Aerial 51" is about the interactions and odd relationships between aliens, campers and counselors at a summer day-camp. Although the children enrolled in the drama program focus largely on the play itself, all children in KYAC are expected to play a role in the final performance. The script for the year-end performance is given to each child during the first

session. Student choose a part they would like to perform by writing down their top twelve character choices. The instructors then go through the lists of choices and each student is assigned one of their top four picks. Students are expected to be familiar with the script and their role within an agreed-upon time period. The second session, beginning in January and running until April, focuses on preparing for the year-end performances. There are also two mandatory dress rehearsals during the weekend closest to the show and five performances, four of which fall on a school day. Mary invites local elementary schools to the show, providing the funds for bus transportation to and from the theatre to watch the matinee performances. Evening performances cost \$10 for parents.

While looking through the local newspaper articles about KYAC we came across the name of a former Artist in Community Education alumnus. Andie Haltrich started bucket-drumming instruction at KYAC for her Alternative Practicum four years ago. Mary said that after Andie left KYAC she began applying for teaching positions and because her resumé included the unique experience of “bucket-drumming”, setting her apart from other candidates, she was immediately hired for a job.

KYAC’s program relies heavily on donations from the local community. Recently, six uniforms were donated from the Uxbridge Taekwondo Academy. The son of the instructor who made this generous donation teaches the Taekwondo classes at KYAC. The Frontenac Community Band, in partnership with Crossroads United Church, also donated money to KYAC. Mary developed a contact with a local photography company, *Bradley Photo*. She told us that she phoned Bradley one day, asking if he would be able to do head-shots of the children for a certain sum of money. After having observed KYAC in action and learning it’s values and belief statement, Bradley decided to donate his time and services to KYAC by coming one day at end of the second session to set up equipment and take head-shots of the performers for the final production.

Analysis:

Website

In today’s day and age, it is integral that a community arts organization have a website providing information that supports the events, participants and programming it offers. We experienced some frustrations while navigating the KYAC website. This particular site does not include the organization title in the domain name, making it challenging for anyone interested in the program to attain further information. Information is not very user-friendly: parents who want to register their child for the program would be lost as there is not a step-by-step process to follow and potential counselors who want to become instructors cannot gain further insight. The website information is not organized in a logical organized fashion as it often provides many links leading to the same page of information. On a positive note, the photography (head-shots) was the first thing to catch our attention and drew us in to navigating our way through

the website. There are links to articles in the local news which is an important publicity tool allowing onlookers to view the accomplishments and history of the organization, legitimizing the happenings within the program.

From the website, we learned that KYAC's core belief is "...that all children deserve an opportunity to participate in the performing arts and explore its wonders." We found this belief statement to be quite vague in its purpose and broad as it sweeps over all of the arts, but fails to focus on the uniqueness of instruction that is offered. Perhaps, the goal of choosing a generalized core belief statement is to lead parents, youth, and volunteers to interpret its meaning in their own way - leading them to explore KYAC and what it has to offer for their own benefit. Perhaps, stating a general core belief appeals and invites a wide variety of individuals into KYAC's programming. Nonetheless, we learned that this program targets a specific socioeconomic class as it strives to supplement arts instruction for youth who do not receive proper arts education. The website fails to explicitly mention this, which could equally attract or deter parents from registering their child. In general, from all of the information that we gathered through our research period, it is clear that KYAC is reaching this goal. They provide a wide variety of programming for students both in and outside of regular school time.

The website left us with general ideas about the outreach program but does not provide first-hand accounts or concrete examples of what it offers youth in local elementary schools. Testimonials would provide the public with evidence that KYAC strives to reach every child who deserves a chance to explore the arts through experiential learning. If we were to implement a community arts organization similar to KYAC, we would first write a letter of consent to parents inquiring about their permission to take photos and document stories of their child's experiences. Second, we would use this documentation to further publicize our program by posting updates of feedback from children experiencing the instruction and excitement of participating in the unique programs. Including the testimonials of parents would also be beneficial, as they see the growth of their child both within the program and at home.

KYAC has a large number of sponsors, however the website does not seem to showcase their sponsors as an integral part of the business. The logos are illegible and there are dead-links to some of the websites. Depending on the contributions of these companies, they should provide KYAC with some advertising on the website to showcase the partnerships that have been built. We learned that KYAC offers a summer day camp but the website fails to offer any information in regards to summer programming. Most often parents are seeking activities for their children throughout the summer months and this could be a much larger and financially successful program if it were advertised.

If we were to initiate a community arts project and create our own website, we would ensure that it would offer a fresh, simple and concise structure, fewer links and feedback from past and current participants. We would construct pages with titles for each program offered

– for example, each page would offer the program title and it’s description, introduce the instructor, provide first-hand accounts of experiences within the program and steps to follow in order to register. We would strive for a user-friendly website outlining the experiences of satisfied customers.

Learning Environment

This program is more than just arts programming and instruction. When we first walked into the facility, we felt welcomed and immediately immersed into the KYAC environment. Although there is a schedule and a rhythm to where everyone is supposed to be, the atmosphere in general is very relaxed. Instructors genuinely care for their students and in turn are trusted to provide a vibrant learning experience - the relationships are interdependent.

At times, the atmosphere was energetic and busy – children were running around, parents were cooking dinner, and instructors were busy answering questions while quickly finishing their dinners in order to continue with the programming. The schedule seems to be open to flexibility including frequent updates and announcements, and leeway for unexpected interruptions. Our presence as observers in this environment seemed to blend in with the busyness of the evening’s activities. Although we interrupted an established routine, it did not seem to affect the general atmosphere.

This environment was conducive to the development of the whole child reflecting the philosophy of *Whole Education*. It seems as though KYAC commits to a more holistic education than one focused on narrow, instrumental concerns. This organization provides an education that invests in the intellectual development of the young person as well as the development of social and emotional competencies. “These competencies are a major part of the foundations that allow every young person to learn effectively and contribute positively to their own development and attainment and to the development of a good society” (Robinson, 2011).

The learning takes place through child-centered education. Sometimes new instructors walk into KYAC programming with specific learning objectives and expectations of a rigorous learning environment, where focus is placed on the art as a discipline. These instructors walk out with misunderstanding and confusion because they do not “gel” with this unique learning environment. Other times, instructors walk in with the objective of working alongside young people, learning who their students are with goals to support students’ growth and development across all domains - social, emotional intellectual, and making sure they are successful in learning new art forms. These instructors understand how this program operates, and walk away feeling successful as an arts educator.

Although the gymnasium of the church is the only room rented for this program, KYAC has made use of other spaces within the church. Music, Taekwondo and other programs branched off into smaller rooms including the nursery, the chapel, main lobby, and the choir room. These

rooms are not comparable to the gymnasium in terms of the large space it provides for movement and interaction. However, smaller rooms like the choir room and nursery were sufficient for teaching and learning, without disrupting other groups in the church. Those who have rented the church space to KYAC have been very accommodating. As long as instructors clean up their materials after instruction, and church property is not destroyed, KYAC will continue to use the additional rooms for instruction. Unfortunately, renting these spaces means that instructors are unable to permanently display visual aids for learning. Instead, materials are to be portable and stored away after each use. In addition, children need to be told not to touch any of the church property.

The storage space on the stage in the gymnasium is ideal for the accumulation of costumes and props that are essential to running this program. All items were placed in trunks according to their purpose. This organization may run into problems finding additional storage space, therefore it would be beneficial to seek out room for the additional accumulation of donated costumes. As perspective owners of similar initiatives, we now understand the importance of having storage options, especially if you are wanting to expand the program.

In general, the church provides a healthy and spacious learning environment for all participants. Every instructor has their own place to teach, the lobby is open for registration and is a place for parents to work on costumes and props, while the kitchen is located beside the gym where students are able to eat their dinners before carrying on in their programs. Renting space within the church has made programming very successful and this is a model we would consider when starting our own initiatives.

Interviews

It was extremely beneficial to conduct interviews with both Caitlin Barton and Mary Greenspan to receive first-hand accounts of KYAC. Caitlin provided us with an in-depth perspective of the business from an employee's standpoint, while Mary provided a broad view of the financial aspects and development of this non-profit community arts project. It is clear from our interactions with these individuals that the staff at KYAC is extremely supportive and driven to reach their goal of providing arts instruction for all children.

After speaking with these women about the financial aspects of KYAC, it is clear that the program often struggles to make ends meet. Mary has funneled a lot of her own personal money into the program, which is a very selfless act. Realistically, many individuals would not be able to make this sacrifice and the business would collapse. After researching the types of fundraising initiatives that the program has implemented, we believe that there are other activities that the organization could engage in to raise more funding. Of course, many of these activities would require more volunteer time from parents and participants, which cannot be overlooked. Perhaps implementing garage sales, bingo events, food sales, and even more performances throughout the school year, would allow for more money to be raised for the program.

The sense of freedom to explore is another aspect that we would like to incorporate into our own programs. Mary is open to having the instructors suggest activities based on their skill set. This allows the program to offer a diverse range of classes and showcases the strengths of the instructors. The fact that Mary has created such an open line of communication with her employees is something that any business owner should strive for. She is committed to creating a positive workspace for both the employees and the students in which they can explore their own personal and collective creativity.

Benefits of Effective Partnerships

“...we need communities that think differently, work differently and are even designed and built differently. Such communities would make for a better, more exciting world in which living, working, and learning come together and recreate vibrant, self-sustaining communities. I would love to live in such a world” (Abbott, 1997). Partnerships are essential for educational development. They enrich and extend the experience of young people and support teaching and training. One of the unique aspects of KYAC is that it is dependent on a web of community partners. When implementing a community based project such as KYAC, it is essential to build relationships with individuals and groups within the city in which you are working. Partnerships offer support, whether it be financially or through marketing opportunities, and they can share responsibilities to ensure success for both groups. We now have a deeper understanding of the importance of gaining local partners when opening an arts program.

Staff Development

KYAC's partnership with Queen's University helps instructors develop their skills and techniques and create professional relationships with a wide variety of other skilled instructors. Instructors develop and promote a wider understanding of their art form from different social perspectives while deepening their understanding of children in different social and cultural situations. In a unique space where many different art forms come together at the end of the year for a final performance, instructors can develop their understanding of different art forms and how they can interact with each other while exploring new teaching strategies.

Youth

Partnerships with local donors, businesses, schools, and parental support help children develop their understanding of the wider community and their roles within it. Children develop the skills and techniques modeled to them by skilled instructors while deepening their understanding of different art forms and their practical application within the community. Both children and instructors experience working as part of a team, building self-confidence and self-esteem in learning new skills and meeting new people sharing innovative ideas.

Partners

The benefits for the organizations and individuals who volunteer with KYAC include sharing skills and expertise with young people and adults in a variety of contexts, while developing their own knowledge and skills. For example, while interviewing Mary Greenspan, one of the parents creating detailed costumes for the final performance approached Mary asking for measurements and new material. While offering her time to KYAC, this parent was developing her artistic skills in a new context. The son of a local Taekwondo Master developed his skills as a martial arts instructor by teaching the Taekwondo class. Partners like *Bradley Photography* find stimulation for their own creative work through partnership with KYAC. It seems as though the ultimate goal of a program like this is ‘social solidarity’ – the blurring of self-awareness, while the unity and cohesion, connectivity of group emerges. Social solidarity happens through the web of community partners that support KYAC, local youth and elementary schools, and team of supporting parents. This unity is fostered through the mutual sharing of abilities and is also dependent on this collaboration of artistic talent.

Sharing Resources

The benefits of KYAC’s partnership with local elementary schools and Crossroads United Church are twofold. First, the ethos of the school and church are enormously enriched through the involvement of the wider community. Second, the school’s and church’s resources are of tremendous support to KYAC when they host KYAC’s programs. Non-profit organizations are dependent on community support for the benefit of the community. Sharing resources ultimately means taking a risk by entrusting others with property. However, when these resources are treated and used well to promote community involvement and reach out to local youth, both parties benefit - the use of these resources are ultimately an investment for the community. “Real partnerships involve putting the needs and interests of others above your own” (Hanley, 2003) - this is what KYAC is all about.

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