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Committee on Criminal Justice

Senator James E. "Jim" King, Jr., President

REVIEW EFFECTIVENESS OF JUVENILE PROGRAMS THAT USE A VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS-BASED INTERVENTION APPROACH

SUMMARY

This report looks at various research studies examining performing and visual arts-based programs in general and at specific programs for at-risk children. Common characteristics of successful programs are discussed, along with descriptions of several effective arts-based prevention/intervention programs. Findings from these studies suggest a positive correlation between involvement in the arts and improvement in academic learning, attitudes, and behaviors of at-risk children. According to researchers, however, measuring this correlation is challenging at best, particularly when attempting to establish causation in fields of research evaluating social services programs involving children who are at risk of becoming delinquent.

Nonetheless, the Legislature should continue to recognize and encourage the positive correlation involving the arts and enhanced learning and improved behaviors by maintaining and/or expanding financial support for arts-based programming in our juvenile justice programs (there is currently a partially state-funded arts-based prevention/intervention program in Central Florida and an ongoing arts-based project in several North Florida detention centers, funded by VSA arts of Florida).

Continued support of these programs could also benefit the Legislature by having a Florida arts-based prevention/intervention juvenile justice program participate in a national study that will attempt to measure the correlation between arts-based prevention/intervention programs and their outcomes (the Central Florida program has been approached about participating in a "National Arts and Youth Demonstration Project"). Valuable data could be gained from this study which would assist the Legislature in determining its level of support for these types of programs in the future.

BACKGROUND

Since 1995, there has been a growing collaborative effort among federal agencies and national arts organizations to promote arts-based programs for at-risk children. These programs are typically after school, weekend and summer programs that provide training in visual arts, drama, dance, music, and graphics and provide the opportunity to use new skills and have contact with positive adult role models.

The overall goals of these programs are as follows: to improve communication and cooperation skills; to improve attitudes and behaviors that affect delinquency and academic performance; to reduce problem and delinquent behaviors; and to increase academic success. Recently, various researchers have attempted to determine if these programs are effective and what features of the programs are the most important to their success.

This interim project provides a review and summary of various findings from several different research projects that studied arts-based prevention/intervention programs. It also describes several nationally recognized and successful arts-based programs in Florida and other states.

METHODOLOGY

Staff reviewed and summarized findings from a wide variety of research studies on arts-based programming for juveniles, as well as spoke to various program providers, agency personnel, and other professionals about this subject. A site visit was also conducted to the arts-based program in Central Florida that is currently under contract with the Department of Juvenile Justice to provide prevention, intervention, and diversionary services to at-risk children.

FINDINGS

Research on Arts-Based Programs and Learning

There have been various studies over the last several years examining the impact of arts education on the academic achievement, behavior, and attitudes of children in preschool, K-12, and at-risk populations. What follows are condensed general findings from many of these studies.

- Students involved with the arts outperform non-arts students on the Scholastic Assessment Test, according to the College Entrance Examination Board. For example, in 1995, SAT scores were 59 points higher on the verbal portion and 44 points higher on the math portion for students who had at least four years of coursework or experience in the arts versus students who had no exposure to the arts. (*The College Board, Profile of SAT and Achievement Test Takers*, 1995.)
- Students who have been consistently involved in music and theatre exhibit higher levels of success in math and reading. (*Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills*, U.S. Department of Labor, 1991.)
- Exposure to arts education impacts the developmental growth of children and helps equalize the learning curve that cuts across diverse socio-economic backgrounds. (*Involvement in the Arts and Success in Secondary School Monograph*, James S. Catterall, The UCLA Imagination Project, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, UCLA, Americans for the Arts, January 1998.)
- A lengthy national project that studied children from low-income backgrounds found that those exposed to arts learning were more likely to be class officers, to be involved with math and science fairs, and to be recognized with a writing award. (*Community Counts: How Youth Organizations Matter for Youth Development*, Shirley Brice Heath, Milbrey W. McLaughlin, 2000.)
- Arts programs, especially ones containing mentorship opportunities and relationships to the community, influence at-risk children toward positive goals and behaviors. (*The Arts and Prosocial Impact Study*, Rand, 1999.)
- Juveniles in correctional facilities involved in performing arts such as a musical production were found to have a higher self-image, learn respect for others, develop trust, and become better team players. ("Using the Arts to Transform Young Lives," *Partners*, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2000.)
- A national study of arts-based delinquency prevention programs in three cities (Atlanta, Georgia; Portland, Oregon; and San Antonio, Texas) found that participation in these types of programs by at-risk children had a positive impact on their attitudes and academic performance, improved their communications abilities, and deterred delinquent and truant behavior. (*YouthARTS Development Project*, U.S. Department of Justice, National Endowment for the Arts, and Americans for the Arts, 1996-1999.)
- Findings in the *YouthARTS Development Project* indicated that at the end of the twelve-week Portland arts-based program, 100 percent of the participating at-risk children showed an ability to cooperate with the other participants, in contrast to only 43 percent of them being able to do so at the beginning of the program. In addition, 31 percent of the arts-based program participants showed an improvement in their attitudes about school at the end of the program, as compared with 7.7 percent of the non-arts comparison group over the same period of time. Meanwhile, participants in the San Antonio arts-based program study saw a decrease in delinquent behavior of 16.4 percent as opposed to a decrease of 3.4 percent in the non-arts comparison group. Moreover, in the Atlanta program, even though the arts-based program participants generally had a higher number of court referrals (6.9 referrals) at the beginning of the program than did their non-arts comparison group (2.2 referrals), they averaged less referrals during the actual program (1.3) than did the non-arts comparison group (2.0). (*YouthARTS Development Project* at p. 7, 10, and 12.)
- *YouthARTS Development Project* findings also showed that equipping at-risk children with new skills, providing them with an opportunity to use those skills, and sharing positive feedback and recognition with them can potentially result in their having improved attitudes and behaviors. (*Id.* at 15.)
- The *YouthARTS Development Project* identified the following common characteristics conducive

to implementing an effective arts-based juvenile delinquency prevention/intervention program: providing talented artists who are also good at working with at-risk children and handling potential problem behaviors; providing numerous opportunities for participants to produce and show their art work or dramatic or musical productions; providing additional on-site trained individuals like counselors, caseworkers, or probation officers who can serve as positive role models for the at-risk children; providing extensive training for the program personnel in such issues as handling at-risk children and problem behaviors, classroom management, and conflict resolution; providing broad collaboration among program partners and other youth-serving groups in the community so that the program can better serve the at-risk participants and their families by providing referrals to outside sources when additional counseling or other assistance is needed; providing access to transportation or other means for participants to avail themselves of the program; and providing an opportunity for at-risk children to continue their community involvement in the arts after the program ends, through additional art classes, jobs, internships, or scholarships. (*Id.*)

- The researchers with the *YouthARTS Development Project* also recognized that evaluating social services programs, especially ones that involve children who are at-risk of becoming juvenile delinquents, is particularly challenging. They went on to say that although there is evidence to suggest that arts-based programs similar to the ones examined in this study can help prevent or reduce juvenile delinquency, the link is not definitive and it needs to continue to be explored in the future. (*Id.* at 13.)
- A different study found that students with high levels of arts learning experiences made better grades and higher scores on standardized tests than those students with minimal or no exposure to the arts, regardless of their socio-economic status. (*Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*, Arts Education Partnership, President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 1999.)
- The *Champions of Change* research is a compilation of seven different studies by various researchers evaluating the impact of arts education and arts experiences on children in school classrooms and in out-of-school settings. These researchers found that involvement in the arts, whether it is visual arts, dance, theatre, or music, helps to develop cognitive, social, and personal skills. There was also agreement among the researchers on several key findings concerning the significance of arts education to these children: it reaches students who are not otherwise being reached; it connects students to themselves and to their peers; it transforms the learning environment; it provides new challenges for students already considered successful; and it assists students in connecting learning experiences to the real working world. (*Id.* at IX and X.)
- One of the *Champions of Change* studies examined student involvement in the arts generally and then more specifically involvement in theatre arts and music. In general, the study found that significant involvement with the arts correlates with higher academic scores, measured by standardized tests (includes verbal and math achievement) and reading proficiency tests for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background. This finding remained consistent when comparing students who were all from a lower socio-economic background, but half were involved with the arts and the other half were not arts-involved students. For example, 30.9 percent of the tested seniors who were highly involved with the arts and from low socio-economic backgrounds scored in the upper half of the standardized tests. In contrast, only 23.4 percent of tested seniors who were not involved with the arts and who were from similar socio-economic backgrounds scored in the upper half. The numbers for proficiency in reading were 37.9 percent for significantly involved arts students from low socio-economic backgrounds as compared to 30.4 percent for the uninvolved arts students from similar backgrounds. (The reading proficiency score for arts-involved seniors from a higher socio-economic background was 42.9 percent.) (*Champions of Change-Involvement in the Arts and Human Development: General Involvement and Intensive Involvement in Music and Theater Arts*, James S. Catterall, Richard Chappleau, John Iwanaga, 1999, p. 8.)
- Although the drop out rate is generally higher for students from a low socio-economic background when compared to students from a higher socio-economic background, this

particular *Champions of Change* study found that the difference between the two groups was negligible when the students from the lower socio-economic background were highly involved with the arts and the higher socio-economic background students were not arts-involved. (3.5 percent of arts-involved eighth grade students from a low socio-economic background dropped out by the tenth grade as compared to 3.7 percent of students from a higher socio-economic background who were not involved with the arts.) (*Id.* at 6 and 8.)

- Significant involvement with instrumental music correlates to a higher proficiency in math. Consistent with this general conclusion, the *Champions of Change* study found that two times as many seniors who were significantly involved with instrumental music and were from lower socio-economic backgrounds exhibited high levels of math proficiency as compared to similarly situated seniors not involved with instrumental music. Moreover, by the twelfth grade, 33.1 percent of the highly involved music students from lower socio-economic backgrounds had surpassed 21.3 percent of the average students from a higher socio-economic background in math proficiency. (*Id.* at 10 and 11.)
- This same *Champions of Change* study also found that high levels of involvement in theatre arts (acting in plays and musicals, taking acting lessons, or membership in a drama club) by students from a lower socio-economic background correlated with greater proficiency in reading. As of the eighth grade, these theatre-arts-involved students outperformed the uninvolved theatre-arts students, and by the twelfth grade, 20 percent more of these children were reading at a high proficiency level. In addition, these students had a better self-concept throughout the longitudinal study, as well as a higher degree of empathy and tolerance for other people. (*Id.* at 14 and 15.)
- In another *Champions of Change* study examining after school programs for at-risk children, researchers found that children participating in arts-based programs were more likely to use complex language and write original text than other at-risk children participating in other after school activities such as sports or community-service groups. They generally felt better about themselves than other

children less at-risk than themselves. (*Champions of Change-Imaginative Actuality: Learning in the Arts During the Nonschool Hours*, 1999, p. 27-28, and 30.)

- Researchers in a different *Champions of Change* study examined at-risk children involved in music or dance programs and saw that participating in one of these art forms gave these children a “safe haven” for the emotional turmoil many faced at home. The researchers also felt that the skills, discipline, and bonds that were formed during this interactive art form helped them to be successful in and out of the classroom. (*Artistic Talent Development for Urban Youth: The Promise and the Challenge*, Barry Oreck, Susan Baum, and Heather McCartney, 1999, p. 77-78.)
- Having said all of this, the *Champions of Change* study also saw the need to further explore the findings suggesting a correlation between involvement in the arts and improvement in academic learning, attitudes, and behaviors of children in an attempt to determine whether this correlation is a definitive one. It recognized that establishing causation in the fields of education and social science research is challenging at best. The study concludes that additional research is needed to flesh out more specifics on the cause and effect of arts-based programming. (*Id.* at 16.)

Arts-based Prevention/Intervention Program Descriptions

Several years ago, the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities published a report identifying numerous successful community arts-based prevention/intervention programs around the country serving at-risk children and describing common characteristics making them effective. (*Coming Up Taller, Arts and Humanities Programs for Children and Youth At Risk* by Judith Humphreys Weitz, President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities with the Americans for the Arts, April 1996.)

Ultimately, common characteristics were gleaned from extensive interviews and site visits to nine of these arts-based prevention/intervention programs. All of the programs provided content-rich, diverse arts opportunities for at-risk children to create or produce plays, musicals, dance, and art. Taken as a whole, these programs spent 24 percent of their time on theater, 18 percent on music, 16 percent on literature, 15 percent on dance, 8 percent on other humanities, 7 percent on

visual arts, and 12 percent on other interests like film, photography, and folk arts. (*Id.*)

All of the successful programs provided additional support services for their at-risk participants, even though the programs were arts-based and not social service programs. Many offered counseling, life skills classes, tutoring, job training, conflict resolution classes, and transportation services. The programs provided a safe haven for at-risk children to share their ideas and to learn, and to be physically and emotionally safe.

The arts-based prevention/intervention programs also provided frequent, direct interaction with trained artists, professionals, and other staff. They fostered well-developed partnerships with schools, other interested community groups, and parents. They were effective at creating balance between flexible and structured programming, allowing the children to be independent but ultimately responsible for their actions.

Small classes were offered, thereby creating an environment in which the opportunity for “hands on” interaction between the teacher and children was greatly enhanced. Providing an opportunity to mentor with a positive role model was one of the important goals for all these prevention/intervention programs.

The at-risk program participants were also given frequent opportunities to succeed in the program by exhibiting, performing, or displaying their talents and by receiving positive public affirmation, many for the first time. Many of these programs also provided the at-risk children opportunities for apprenticeships, potential employment, and significant exposure to technology. (*Id.*)

In 1998, the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, along with the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities began recognizing exemplary arts-based prevention/intervention programs around the county. Several of them are described below.

The Spot, a youth center located in Denver, Colorado, offers services to at-risk urban children from ages 14 to 24. Many of the children who participate are involved in gangs. The program operates at night, with an average of 80-100 children attending each night. The program was founded in 1994 and offers training in computer networking, web and graphic design, music

creation and dance, as well as GED preparation and testing (the GED graduation rate in 2000 was 36 percent). The program also publishes and distributes a magazine annually that displays the participants’ art, poetry, photographs, and writings. Program staff members are artists that have also received training in suicide/crisis intervention and conflict mediation. Self-reported participant interviews indicate the program has had a positive impact on their behavior--reductions in the number of assaults and robberies (down 11 percent), illegal drug use (down 20 percent), gang involvement (down 9 percent), and the number of arrests (down 25 percent).

Another recognized arts-based program, **Dance-The Next Generation**, started in 1991 in Sarasota, Florida, provides a full scholarship program for seven years to at-risk children from targeted schools starting in the third grade. Typically, 100 children are served each year. The Sarasota Ballet of Florida provides dance instruction, dancewear, and transportation free to these children. The program participants also receive instruction in theatre and social etiquette, dance history, performance practice, public speaking, homework, nutrition, and when needed, counseling. As they progress in the program, they are able to perform with the Ballet’s professional company in such productions as *The Nutcracker*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, *Don Quixote*, and *Alice in Wonderland*. The families of the participants are also encouraged to participate in weekend workshops with their children. Children who successfully complete the program are eligible to apply for a four-year academic scholarship (the program partners with the University of South Florida). Another partner, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, provides mentors for the children. Program graduates act as role models for the younger participants. According to the program, the older students keep a grade point average between 3.5- 4.0, and many become members of the Junior National Honor Society.

Another recognized arts-based prevention/intervention program, **Progressive After School Art Community Education (PACE)**, was started in 1991 by the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach. Initially, the after school program to serve at-risk children began in an urban housing project in Belle Glade, Florida, but now the program has five locations in the Palm Beach and Martin County areas. It generally serves 500-2,000 children annually. The program provides two-hour multi-disciplinary art classes three times a week for children between the ages of 5 and 18. The program also includes four annual visits to the museum. The Norton Museum hires trained professionals within the

community to serve as teachers, mentors, and role models. The Norton Museum partners with the following community groups: Boys and Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County, Inc., Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, Martin County Parks and Recreation Department, and local housing authorities.

Bakehouse Children's Art Workshop in Miami, Florida is another example of an arts-based prevention program offering visual arts experiences in sculpting, script writing, theater production, photography, and quilt making. These programs are offered after school, on weekends, and in the summer to at-risk middle school aged children. The children who attend this program are enrolled in special education classes, have been retained a grade or more, have excessive school absences, are several grades below average, or have alternative education involvement. The Bakehouse Art Complex partners with several middle schools, local businesses, and the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs to provide these programs. The artwork is displayed and several one-act plays are conducted for audiences during the year. The Bakehouse artists teach art and social skills to their participants. Program officials report they can see positive behavior changes in the at-risk children who regularly attend classes.

The **S.T.A.R.S.** program ("**Success through Academic and Recreation Support**") in Fort Myers, Florida, is an after school multidisciplinary arts and recreation program sponsored by the city since 1989. It offers art instruction, music, dance, poetry, and creative writing, along with numerous educational and recreational opportunities to at-risk children who range in age from 6 to 14 years of age. The program is housed in a large recreational complex. The program participants are provided transportation to the complex where they also receive homework assistance. Tutoring is available for math, reading, computers, and SAT and FCAT preparation. According to local police, there has been a noticeable reduction in juvenile arrests in their area since this program began.

The **Creative Arts Unit** of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Broward County provided after school and summer performing arts opportunities to 894 children, ages 7-18 years, during last year. This program offers drama, theatre, and music instruction. The children perform recitals and musical productions. Participating children are transported from school to the program. Program participants are members of different Boys and Girls Clubs located in high-risk neighborhoods around the county. Program officials report that participating in

the Creative Arts programs has kept boys and girls from becoming members of different gangs in Broward County. To be successful, the program also relies heavily on parental involvement as well as support by professional artists from the community.

Another performing and visual arts-based prevention/intervention program called **PRODIGY**, is located in Tampa, Florida. PRODIGY is situated near the University of South Florida, in the middle of a blighted and high crime area formerly known as "Suitcase City" because of the transient nature of its inhabitants. The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) contracts with this program to provide prevention, intervention, and diversion services for at-risk children and young offenders between the ages of 7-17 by using visual and performing arts to improve their attitudes, learning skills, and reduce potential and real truancy and criminal activity. Supervision and counseling are strong components of the program.

The program started in June 2000, as a three-year arts-based pilot project when the new University Area Community Center Complex opened. Program participants perform numerous recitals and two major productions a year to show what they have learned in their performing arts classes in the Community Center Complex. Students also display their visual arts products in several places in the Community Center Complex, as well as in other public and private buildings around the city.

Diversion participants receiving services are youth who have been charged with a misdemeanor or non-violent first-time felony and live in the targeted area. In addition to the arts component, these youth receive case management services, intensive supervision, victim restitution collection, sanction monitoring, social work services, educational training, and individual and family counseling. Intervention and prevention youth make up the rest of the served population. (Intervention youth are receiving services from the DJJ, teen court, arbitration, or drug court, and prevention youth are siblings or family members of the PRODIGY participants.)

Bay Area Youth Services (BAYS) is the program partner that provides case management and supervision for these youth. The Hillsborough Community College provides the performing arts component of PRODIGY, emphasizing theater, chorus, music, and dance, as well as providing the following visual arts: photography, drawing, and pottery. The other program partner, University Area Community Development

Corporation, manages the 50,000 square foot Community Center Complex, coordinates the partners, and publicizes and raises money for the programs. (PRODIGY receives 50 percent of its funding through the state contract with the DJJ and the rest from local and private entities.)

According to PRODIGY officials, after participating in the program, students attained a school attendance rate of 85 percent, disciplinary referrals decreased by over 76 percent, eighty-three percent of them maintained a grade point average of a “C” or better, ninety-eight percent of them were crime-free during non-school hours with only two arrests, and ninety-nine percent of the PRODIGY students did not commit violent crimes during the program. During the 2001-2002 contract year with the DJJ, 858 youths participated in 8,454 classes through the PRODIGY program.

According to the most recent quarterly narrative report filed by BAYS to the department, 85 percent of the youth released from the diversion component of PRODIGY remained crime free six months after release, 98 percent of the participating youth in the program remained crime free during non-school hours, 100 percent of the participating youth during the third quarter did not commit a violent crime, and 84 percent of the youth released from the program successfully completed the program and maintained a 97 percent school attendance rate.

Discussions are underway, according to PRODIGY officials, to have their program included as one of several arts-based prevention/intervention programs to be studied as part of a three-year national study called the “National Arts and Youth Demonstration Project.” The project will examine the effectiveness of these programs on such positive outcomes as staying in school, improving academic learning and self-esteem, and reducing involvement in negative behavior such as substance abuse, crime, and violence. The projected final report is due by September 2004.

The other arts-based project that the DJJ is involved with is the **Arts in Detention Project**. During the 2001-2002 program year, the DJJ and the VSA arts of Florida joined together to introduce art to the youth in regional juvenile detention centers in Alachua, Bay, Duval, Escambia, Leon, Marion, Okaloosa, St. John, and Volusia counties. This pilot project was funded by VSA arts of Florida. Future plans for the 2002-2003

program year include expanding the program to include Brevard County Juvenile Detention Center and Pinellas County Juvenile Detention Center.

As a result of this pilot project involving certain detention centers, in the first six months of 2002, more than 5,000 juveniles detained in these centers were given information and instruction from artists and mentors showing positive and creative ways through art to use their free time, develop talent and skills, and reduce impulsiveness. The juveniles increased their knowledge and skills by being exposed to local artists and art instructors in the areas of dance, design, drawing, writing, painting, sculpture, photography, literature, story telling, jewelry making, music, and drama. Many of the artists and volunteers have decided to continue to participate in the program. Students were able to display their art products at the statewide Detention Services Symposium, the Juvenile Justice Education Institute, the Art in Education Conference, and the Art League of Daytona Beach. According to the department’s Regional Director for North Region Detention Services, this project is a “win-win” for everyone involved with it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As evidenced by the research being done on the positive effects of performing and visual arts-based prevention/intervention programs on children’s attitudes, behaviors, and academic successes, the Legislature should continue to recognize and encourage this important link by maintaining and/or expanding financial support for arts-based programming in our juvenile justice programs. The Legislature should continue to “think outside the box” when it comes to investing in the future of our children by encouraging these kinds of creative rehabilitative programs promoting positive self-esteem, improved learning, and positive behavior.

By continuing to support such programs, the Legislature will also have the benefit of having a Florida arts-based prevention/intervention juvenile justice program participate in a national study that will attempt to measure the correlation between these programs and their positive outcomes. Valuable data could be gained from this study, making it easier for the Legislature to determine its degree of support for future prevention/intervention arts-based programming in juvenile justice programs in Florida.