

**Dissecting the Pink Octopus:**  
**A Comparative Study of Arts-Based Programs for “At-Risk” Youth**

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in conjunction with Oddfellows Playhouse

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## **Executive Summary**

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### **Project Overview:**

Our research team assisted Oddfellows Playhouse, a youth theater based in Middletown, CT, in conducting a comparative study amongst similar arts-based organizations in hopes of compiling a collective body of knowledge that would both improve Oddfellows' Neighborhood Troupes program and provide relevant information for all organizations involved in the study.

### **Participating Organizations:**

**Oddfellows Playhouse:** Middletown, Connecticut. A youth theater that runs "Neighborhood Troupes," a tuition-free program designed specifically for children from low-income housing areas.

**RAW Artworks:** Lynn, Massachusetts. A tuition-free after-school arts program focused primarily on the creation of visual art (in various media) as a form of art therapy.

**All Children's Theater:** Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Tuition-free outreach organization that provides theater programming for various groups of "at-risk" youth.

**Community MusicWorks:** Providence, Rhode Island. A tuition-free program staffed by members of a string quartet that provide music lessons in viola, cello, and violin.

**Neighborhood Music School:** New Haven, Connecticut. A tuition-free weekly program focused primarily on providing music-based arts classes. Parent participation is required.

**Green Street Arts Center:** Middletown, Connecticut. A new program that will eventually provide visual/performance arts classes to 90 students, half of whom would receive financial aid.

### **Summary of General Findings:**

#### **Program Design**

- The people involved in program design range from almost exclusively instructors at some organizations to students, administrators, parents and more at others.
- Various methods of discipline are used at each organization, but always with a stress on creating an environment of mutual respect.
- Each organization had unique characteristics that helped make them successful. These include the RAW chief program at RAW, the facilitator at CMW, allowing kids to decorate the space, mixing age groups, and having a variety of activities

#### **Staffing**

- Professional Staff. Some programs feel it is important to have a professional staff, highly trained in an art form. When teachers have professional skills in an art form, they inspire children to set high standards for themselves.
- Honesty is key. A teacher needs to set standards and hold everyone to them. Kids admire when teachers are "straight up" with them, giving them positive critique on their work.
- It is important to give kids and parents roles of responsibility--on a board, as parent coordinators, or using the kids directly as arts instructors. When given more

responsibility, children and parents begin to feel ownership of and intense pride in the agency.

- Diversity in staffing is critical. Providing students with mentors they can relate to is an essential part of education.

### **Program Assessment**

- Program assessment may involve *internal voices* (students, teachers, and teaching assistants), *external voices* (parents, outside observers from the community, and former students), or both.
- Assessments may be carried out by *formal methods* of evaluation (surveys, written evaluations, parent meetings, etc.) or *informal methods* of evaluation (discussions between students, teaching assistants, teachers and parents); informal methods seem most effective for internal assessment.
- In programs that deal primarily with children, evaluating the program often is equated with evaluating the progress of the children. Because of this, organizations have had to deal with the question of defining success. Programs fall along a “success spectrum,” where success is measured anywhere from proficiency in an art form to more general progress in personal development. Successful programs seem to employ a combination of the two “mentalities.”

### **Parent and Community Involvement**

- Parent focus groups, councils, and coordinators seem to be the best way to address the barriers to parent involvement.
- Parent and neighborhood involvement are the highest when programs bring events to the neighborhoods themselves; however, getting the greater community to attend program events still poses a problem that needs to be addressed.
- The increase in both parental and community support should be a primary focus because both are crucial to the development of self-esteem and confidence in “at-risk” children, a development that remains the central goal of these arts-based programs.

### **Funding**

- It is important to have a variety of funding and to keep good communication with donors - making them feel good about donating by honoring them.
- It is extremely important to become well known to donors through events. Fundraising events are important in building a reputation. Donors may be more likely to give money if they see public efforts to fundraise by programs.
- It is also very beneficial to funding to be active in the community. Putting a positive face to an organization helps immensely in attracting funding through both community projects and individual donors.

## **Acknowledgements**

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The Wesleyan research team would like to thank Oddfellows Playhouse and Dominick Grant for their initiative in getting this study started and their continuous input. We would also like to thank Green Street Arts Center, Raw Art Works, Community MusicWorks, All Children's Theatre, and the Neighborhood Music School for their participation and invaluable contribution to the project. Finally, we'd like to thank Rob Rosenthal, Cheryl Lim, and the rest of the Community Research Seminar for their advice and encouragement.

# **Introduction**

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## **Purpose of Project and Project Overview**

Our research team was selected to assist Oddfellows Playhouse, a youth theater in Middletown, CT, in conducting a comparative research project amongst similar arts-based organizations. This research was conducted in hopes of compiling a collective body of knowledge that would both improve Oddfellows' Neighborhood Troupes program and provide relevant information for all organizations involved in the study. In order to do this, we gathered information from Oddfellows and other organizations, focusing our research on the following issues laid out by Oddfellows: (1) parent and community involvement; (2) program design and execution; (3) program funding; (4) methods of program assessment; and (5) administration and staffing. This information was obtained primarily through interviews with program staff and directors as well as through program literature and participant observation in the programs' classes when time permitted. The comparative analysis of the information gathered is a compilation of the current designs, ideas, successes, and concerns of all the organizations. It is our hope that through a combination of the raw data, the comparisons made between programs, and the various opinions surrounding "what works and what doesn't work"—a judgment drawn from both agency opinions and our own observations—this research will help generate an informative and useful synthesis of how programs can more effectively serve their specific target populations.

## **Brief Introduction to Arts-Based After-School Programs**

Both government agencies and private philanthropists have supported arts-based after-school programs since the 1960s, but only recently has the importance of such programs been recognized, especially those programs geared towards "at-risk" youth. The National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) established an Expansion Arts program in 1971 in order to encourage partnerships between arts-based programs and local community organizations focused on neighborhood development. More recently, the NEA has begun to expand its support for programs that use the arts to engage "at-risk" youth by partnering with government agencies like the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice to endorse new

projects. In 1994 Hillary Rodham Clinton became the Honorary Chair of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and charged the Committee to increase the accessibility of the arts to "at-risk" children. She viewed arts programs as safe havens and noted, "In communities where programs already exist, they are providing soul-saving and life-enhancing opportunities for young people" (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities: 1994). The Committee produced an extensive study of arts-based after-school programs in *The Coming Up Taller Report* (1994). Many studies such as this have found arts-based programs to be particularly beneficial to "at-risk" youth by identifying effective strategies used to engage these youth and stimulate resiliency for dealing with various living environments. In general,

[Youth] must have sustained, caring relationships with adults; receive guidance in facing serious challenges; become a valued member of a constructive peer group; feel a sense of worth as a person; become socially competent, know how to use the support systems available to them; achieve a reliable basis for making informed choices; find constructive expression of the curiosity and exploration that strongly characterizes their age; believe in a promising future with real opportunities; and find ways of being useful to others. In short, children and youth need caring families and communities. (The Carnegie Council of Adolescent Development, in *The Coming Up Taller Report*, 1994)

More specific to our research into arts-based programs, studies of these kinds of organizations situated in inner cities show that involvement in constructive arts-based activities decreases delinquent behavior, increases academic success and promotes more positive attitudes towards students' lives and futures (Americans for the Arts, February 1998:3).

### **Discussion of the Term "At-Risk"**

The expansion of arts-based after-school programs targeting "at-risk" youth has come largely in response to the changing environments that today's youth are exposed to and the developmental and psychological effects of these new environments (1994). The President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities identifies child poverty as the most common threat to child wellbeing, but a variety of factors may cause a child to be labeled "at-risk." Notably, many educators we interviewed considered all youth growing up in today's world to be "at risk of 'something'," and this mentality is reinforced by the authors of the *Coming Up Taller Report*: "All children and youth face some adversity as they grow up" (1994: 5) This report proceeds, however, to address specific risk factors faced by some contemporary children:

- Insufficient parental support and guidance
- Schools with low expectations
- Few opportunities and challenges for growth or contribution
- Poor and over-crowded neighborhoods
- Exposure to drugs and alcohol
- Early initiation into sexual situations

Studies have shown that “children facing these circumstances show an inability to resist the influence of unhealthy behavior in peers and are drawn to those who already have become risk-takers” (1994: 5) Almost four million children are exposed to at least four of the above risk factors in the neighborhoods around them. Frighteningly, research has shown that exposure to even *one* of these risk factors often leads to a snowballing into the others, inferring that consistent involvement with or proximity to negative influences has the potential to place a child on a slippery slope towards other risks:

Those who drink and smoke in early adolescence are thus more likely to initiate sex earlier than their peers; those who engage in these behavior patterns often have a history of difficulties in school. When young people have a low commitment to school and education, and when teachers or parents have low expectation of the children’s performance, trouble lurks. Once educational failure occurs, then other adverse events begin to take hold. (1994: 5).

Though it cannot be denied that some adolescents are exposed to more of these “risk factors” than others, the dangers behind labeling a group of children as “at-risk” must be addressed. Labels often reinforce power structures and stereotypes; the group given the authority to “label” others is often seen as having more knowledge about the situation, whereas the group being labeled is often forced into the role of passive subject. The terminology of “at-risk” proves to be further problematic in the sense that grouping children in such a way stimulates views of these youth as “different” which is “hampering and maladaptive” (Ryan, 1976: 10). Because of these dangers—most specifically, the danger of universalizing and containing the problematic term under one definition—we have decided to use each agency’s individual definition of “at-risk” instead of suggesting our own over-arching definition. While some agencies refused to define the term specifically (claiming, instead, that all children were “at-risk”), others expanded the more typical definitions of the term to include children with mental and physical handicaps, while still other agencies utilized a totally different term for the population they served.

A program manager at Oddfellows Playhouse preferred the term “under-resourced” to “at-risk;” this idea remained with us as we researched agencies, encouraging us to expand our original search to include programs that served low-income neighborhoods, even if these programs did not specifically employ the term “at-risk” in describing their target populations. This decision was partly based on the common belief that resources are often equated with power and leverage, and people lacking sufficient resources are more likely to be at risk of lacking agency in their communities (Rosenthal, 1996: 202-203.)

### **A Brief Overview of the Organizations<sup>1</sup>**

**Oddfellows Playhouse (ODDF)<sup>2</sup>:** Middletown, Connecticut. A youth theater that runs both tuition-based and tuition free classes for children ages 5-18. Their “Neighborhood Troupes” program, serving 77 students, is specifically designed for children living in local low-income housing projects.

**RAW Artworks (RAW):** Lynn, Massachusetts. A tuition-free after-school arts program focused primarily on the creation of visual art (in various media) as a form of art therapy. This organization does not cap the number of students.

**All Children’s Theater (ACT):** Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Tuition-free outreach organization that provides theater programming for various groups of “at-risk” youth, including homeless children and children with mental or physical disabilities. ACT reaches over 22,000 children a year through its myriad programs.

**Community MusicWorks (CMW):** Providence, Rhode Island. A tuition-free program that runs private and group music lessons in viola, cello, and violin for 65 children. These classes are taught by a four-person faculty composed of members of a string quartet.

**Neighborhood Music School (NMS):** New Haven, Connecticut. A tuition-free weekly program focused primarily on music-based arts classes (though in conjunction with a visual arts program next door) that requires parent participation. NMS serves 65 families.

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<sup>1</sup> More extensive program overviews will follow in the Program Design section of the report.

<sup>2</sup> Some program abbreviations are used by the actual organizations while others were created by the research team.

**Green Street Arts Center (GSAC):** Middletown, Connecticut. A new program that hopes to eventually provide visual and performance arts classes for ninety students in grades three through twelve. Forty-five of those slots are reserved for students needing financial aid.

## **Literature Review**

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Extensive research and writing has been done concerning the effects of after-school arts programs on children and especially “at-risk” children. Many of the articles that discuss these topics go into details about common characteristics of successful programs, and statistics on how children are affected. While this can be interesting and helpful, it provides only a generalized view of running such programs. Our research, spearheaded by Oddfellows Playhouse, explores five specific areas that are important in running successful organizations and explores possible solutions that have been implemented to common problems.

### **Program Design and Execution**

Arts-based organizations have a variety of ways to engage youth in the arts, but common strategies for program design and execution can be identified among successful organizations. “The Coming Up Taller Report” by the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities (1994) discusses effective approaches to program execution among organizations across the country, specifically stressing that a balance between structure and flexibility is central to a successful program’s curriculum. Effective programs provide a sense of structure by laying out clearly stated goals that youth can achieve and feel successful in meeting. Similarly, Heath (1999) argues that to reinforce the completion of goals within a program, arts-based organizations should apply “the 3 R’s,”—roles, rules, and risks. Children play many different roles within organizations and are held responsible for the jobs they perform. Jobs can vary from serving as mentors and instructors for other children to serving on boards and committees to providing security for buildings (Heath and Soep, 1998: 10). Youth are expected to collectively contribute to the execution of program goals, filling in roles where needed. In this way, all children feel a sense of responsibility toward the success of the program. At the same time, flexibility is maintained as children take part in decision-making. Heath and Soep emphasize the

importance of risks. Risk taking is demanded of youth in arts programs, as creativity is encouraged and children are constantly critiqued by others around them and by audiences when they perform (1998: 13). In our study, we looked at how different programs treat these themes. It can be difficult to balance structure and flexibility and each program we studied has a different approach.

Most studies agree that engaging youth requires establishing a professional atmosphere that pushes the children to meet high expectations. Oreck, Baum, and McCartney (2000) illustrate what a sense of professionalism does for a program. If children are given challenging but attainable goals, they begin to feel like professionals in the field they are mastering. This inspires confidence and encourages youth to step up to challenges and set ever-higher goals (2000: 76).

### **Administration and Staffing**

Almost all aspects of program design and execution depend on the staffing of an organization. Most of the studies on arts-based after-school programs agree that tight budgets lead to understaffed organizations. Heath suggests that one way to get around this is to assign tasks to children in the program, which provides the organization with workers and the children with a sense of responsibility over the execution of program goals (1999: 10). Oreck stresses that it is important to maintain low staff-to-student ratios despite understaffing (2000).

Volunteers are often used to aid with instruction and staff members with diverse skills are important to fill various jobs. High quality instruction is one of the most essential aspects of a program because it influences how well a program engages its youth. Maintaining professionalism requires a highly trained staff (often professionals in the art they teach) that can provide instruction to beginners as well as more advanced students (Oreck and Baum, 2000: 73). Our study looks at whether programs agree or disagree with this opinion of staffing.

### **Program Assessment**

Another theme of great importance in running programs for youth is assessment. “Program Planning and Evaluation” by Americans for the Arts (1997) discusses a process by which organizations can assess their organization and identify and solve problems. Known as the logic model, it is a “graphic representation that clearly identifies and charts the relationships

between a program's conditions, activities, outcomes and impacts...a planning tool that lays out how and why a program works" (1997: 2). Such a model is convenient in its ambiguity because it can be used in many ways. Typically programs use it as a presentation to their funding agencies on how efficiently and effectively the programs run. It can also be used internally to help identify and resolve issues.

We found a variety of different ways in which programs assess themselves, and how they implement change. Articles that describe common characteristics of successful programs can be used as guidelines for assessment. Sabatelli and Anderson (2001) give an extensive list of specific "outcome indicators" used for assessment purposes:

- Youth Personal Adjustment
- Youth Social Competencies
- Relationship with Family
- Positive Adult/Youth Relationships
- Positive Youth/School Connection
- Positive Youth/Peer Connection
- Positive Youth/Community Connections

Our report looked specifically at many of these "outcome indicators" in order to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each program.

### **Parent and Community Involvement**

An important concern for non-profit organizations targeting youth is parent and community involvement. Gasman and Anderson-Thompkins argue that "...the single most important characteristic in effective programs is the involvement of young people's parents, community members, and schools" (2001: 433). Unfortunately, the authors do not offer any suggestions as to how organizations can garner such involvement. Heath and Soep (1998), on the other hand, do present some measures implemented to involve the community, including how it can be beneficial to have older children in the program take on responsibility by acting as mentors to younger children. Heath (1999) goes even further, illustrating that involving youth in the administration of the programs, such as writing thank-you letters to funding organizations, can be beneficial.

## **Program Funding**

Programs usually must take innovative approaches to funding, drawing from many different sources in order to achieve enough financial support. According to the President's Committee on Arts and Humanities, most donors- individuals, foundations, corporations and government are local (1994). Government support, however, is usually the largest of these donors (President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, 1994: 15). Programs vary in size and approach, but Heath determined that the average cost for an after school arts program is about one thousand dollars per individual per year (1999: 33). The programs we studied target low-income families and do not charge much tuition, so fundraising accounts for a large portion of their budget. The most effective way to raise money seems to be through writing grants and asking for donations from individuals, groups, or the government. We were particularly interested in seeing how programs approach the cumbersome task of fundraising, what type of donors seem to be the most reliable and who is involved in the fundraising. Following Heath's theories that youth should be incorporated into all aspects of program execution, we were curious to find if programs involve kids in fundraising, such as through performances and events.

## **Summary**

While most of the studies we read highlighted common elements that make up effective youth arts programs, not as much was said as to *how* these organizations design programs that engage youth and provide structures that support their mission statements. After studying multiple programs that provide instruction in different types of art, we are able to report on a variety of visions. Although each program takes different approaches, all the programs aim at a similar mission-- to provide a safe and fulfilling experience for "at-risk" youth through the arts.

## **Methodology**

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### **Contacting the organizations**

In consultation with Dominick Grant, Oddfellows Program Coordinator, an initial list of seven organizations that ran arts-based after-school programs focused towards "at-risk" youth was drawn up. Dominick made the initial contact with these organizations, and we followed up

with four of the organizations that had responded favorably. Three of the original organizations eventually agreed to the project. New candidates for a fourth organization were researched later, then contacted by Dominick until one also agreed to participate.

Each organization agreed to three to four interviews (either in person, by telephone, or by email) that would each last from forty-five minutes to an hour.

### **Preparing the interviews**

We compiled our interview schedule by individually coming up with questions for five specific focus areas given to us by Dominick: (1) Program Design; (2) Parent/Community Involvement; (3) Program Assessment; (4) Funding; and (5) Administration/Staffing. Our research team divided the responsibility of categorizing and condensing the suggested questions for these five focus topics before discussing our final interview schedule as a group (see Appendix C).

For each organization, we decided it would be most beneficial to interview (1) the program director of the entire organization, (2) the program director of the specific “at-risk” program, (3) at least one teacher, and (4) if possible, a teaching assistant/volunteer.

After our pretest, we were encouraged to alter the original interview schedule from specific questions to a checklist of topics we wanted to address (see Appendix D). This allowed for the interview to have a more conversational tone. An informal “discussion” seemed more conducive to responding to the issues we were posing.

Questions of confidentiality were addressed with all interviewees. We agreed that individual interviewee names would be kept confidential if requested, while the organization names would be public information. All interviewees were given information sheets (Appendix A) and consent forms (Appendix B) and all interviews were recorded with either a mini-disk or a tape recorder. Interviewees were asked to consent to the recording beforehand.

### **Participant Observation**

Each research team member went to one of the Oddfellows Neighborhood Troupes classes in order to do participant observation, thereby allowing us to witness four out of the five Neighborhood Troupe classes in action. While we originally planned on conducting participant

observation at all organizations, this was only done at Oddfellows and the Neighborhood Music School due to time constraints and program design (*see Problems section*).

## **Interviews**

On-site interviews were conducted with all five organizations<sup>3</sup>, beginning at **Oddfellows**, where we conducted interviews with the organization director, the Neighborhood Troupes program director, and two teachers of Neighborhood Troupes classes. After assessing the experiences of our Oddfellows interviews, we decided that it was beneficial to have two interviewers at each future interview, one to make eye contact and ask the questions as the other person kept track of the interview schedule to make sure we had not missed any topics. All further on-site interviews were conducted with two researchers present. At **Raw Art Works**, a joint interview was conducted with the program director and one of the teachers. An additional, shorter interview was conducted with a RAW Chief (see description below). No participant observation occurred in a classroom, but we took a tour of the facilities and looked at numerous examples of student artwork. At **All Children's Theatre**, four employees were interviewed at once: two program directors and two teachers. On-site participant observation was impossible because ACT is an outreach program that works specifically in bringing their program into outside organizations, some of which are institutions closed to the public, such as homeless shelters. At **Community MusicWorks**, one interview was conducted with the person who serves as both the artistic director and a teacher at the program. No other interviews were conducted, mainly because there are only three other people associated with the program and they are all teachers. At the **Neighborhood Music School**, interviews were conducted with one teacher and one program director. A brief, informal discussion also took place with a parent coordinator. We also observed various classes in action.

Follow-up phone interviews/email interviews were conducted with the organizations in order to clarify previous interview responses or to retain new information that was not adequately covered in the on-site interviews.

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that when referring to the "six organizations" in other parts of the report, we are including out pretest, Green Street Arts Center.

We received program literature and assessment sheets from most of the organizations. These were utilized to describe the programs in their own terms, as well as provide examples of assessment forms so that the organizations can compare their methods of assessment.

**Table of Formal Interviews Conducted**

	<b>Program Directors</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Teaching Assistants</b>
<b>Oddfellows Playhouse</b>	2	2	
<b>RAW Art</b>	1	1	1
<b>All Children’s Theater</b>	2	2	
<b>Neighborhood Music School</b>	1	1	
<b>Community Music Works</b>	1	1 <sup>4</sup>	
<b>Green Street Art Center<sup>5</sup></b>	1		

**Transcriptions**

Transcriptions following each interview were originally done by a team member who had *not* been present at the interview unless the recording was not clear, in which case transcribing was done by someone who had been present. However, in the interest of time, transcribing ended up being done by group members who were present at the interview. Additionally, for time’s sake, transcribing methods were altered from word-for-word transcribing to summarizing with choice quotations being written word-for-word.

**Analysis**

All interview transcriptions were read by all group members. However, each group member was assigned to focus on one or two of the five focus areas. This way, the task was split by focus area, but all of our opinions were considered for all aspects of the report. This provided a system of checks and balances to make sure nothing was forgotten. The writing of both the outline and the final report were also split into these sections with frequent group meetings held

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<sup>4</sup> In the case of CMW, the program director and the teacher were the same person; hence, at CMW, only one interview was conducted.

<sup>5</sup> Green Street acted as our pretest, which explains the fewer number of interviews.

to ensure that no pertinent information was being excluded. The final report, while organized around Oddfellows' five areas of interest, gives equal analytical weight to all organizations researched, at the request of Oddfellows.

## **Problems**

Overall, the research process went smoothly, yet there were several methodological problems encountered that should be noted. These problems relate to inconsistencies in our interviewing methods that have the potential to affect the accuracy of the study.

The first point of discrepancy was the subjectivity of the interviews. The four researchers could not be present at every interview, so the interviews had to be split among the researchers. Although we used the same interview schedule for all of the interviews (after the pretest), the fact that our revised interview schedule was a checklist instead of specific questions allowed the interviewer more leeway in directing the conversation. With different people conducting each interview, there is always the risk that different questions will be asked, the same questions could be asked in a different style, and/or the dynamics between the interviewer and interviewee could differ. This problem of subjectivity is impossible to completely overcome (every interview would be slightly different despite measures taken to prevent discrepancies), but the problem was addressed in several ways. First of all, an interview schedule was created in a checklist form to be sure each interview covered the same basic information. Secondly, two or more researchers were present at every interview. Finally, in an attempt to address the subjectivity problem, the tapes of the first couple of interviews were exchanged so that the researchers could become acquainted with each other's interviewing style.

Another hindrance in the research was the lack of time available for interviewing. In order to gather the most information, group interviews were held at several organizations. As a result, instead of interviewing the program director and teachers separately, interviews were held where several members of the staff were asked the questions at the same time. This created a more dynamic interview, with staff members feeding and working off each other in answering questions; however, because these group interviews were not conducted at each organization, the quality of the information gathered might differ. In addition, the group interview style brought up the issue of how power dynamics could potentially affect the responses of some of the staff. The presence of the program director had the potential to influence the type of answer a teacher

or other staff member gave. Despite this risk, the research team believes that the honesty of the answers was not greatly affected due to the abundant responses in regards to both strengths and weaknesses from all staff members. In this case, the researchers believed that the need for a variety of opinions in a very limited amount of time as well as the positive dynamic effect the group interview style had on the interview outweighed the potential negative effects of a power dynamic. If we were to continue or conduct similar research in the future, we would consider doing a combination of group interviewing and individual interviews for each organization.

Finally, the researchers did not have the same amount of access to each organization. While some participant-observation was done, it could not be done at all organizations due to time constraints. Additionally, two of the organizations ran their programs outside the facility we visited, making it impossible to observe the classes. Being able to observe classes at some organizations and not others held the possible consequence of coloring our comparative perceptions of the programs. However, we felt that the benefits of observing as many classes as possible enhanced our analysis of the organizations and outweighed the negative effects of a possibly unfair comparison between organizations. We recognize the unequal amount of data collected for each organization and do our best to weight all data equally nonetheless.

As shown in the above table, the number of interviews conducted with each organization differed as well. While a program director and teacher were represented from each organization, some organizations supplied more opinions by allowing more teacher or volunteer interviews. The researchers felt that the more information we could gather, the more informative the study would be, and therefore took every opportunity to interview additional staff members (despite the effect it may have, creating disproportionate representation of some organizations). Ideally all staff members would have participated in individual or group interviews.

## **Data and Analysis**

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*The following data is drawn directly from interviews and literature given to us by the organizations researched. The analysis is based on a combination of staff opinions and our own opinions as researchers and outside observers. While at some points in the following analysis we choose to make judgments about the organizations, we recognize our own biases and hope that the data presented will allow the reader to make his or her own judgments about “what works and what doesn’t.”*

## General Description of Each Program

### All Children's Theatre (ACT), Pawtucket, Rhode Island

Description/history of Program	Mission Statement	Key terms/Vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded in 1987</li> <li>• Conducts outreach programs in theater instruction to organizations serving “at-risk” youth throughout Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Connecticut</li> <li>• Organizations include DCYF (Department of Children, Youth and Families) homes, various schools including bridge schools, and more</li> <li>• Outreach programs include After School Drama, Curriculum Integration, and programs for developmentally disabled students</li> </ul>	<p>“ACT’s primary mission is to empower, educate and entertain children and their families with quality, educationally based theatre for, by and with children”</p> <p>(<a href="http://www.actinri.org/About%20us.htm">http://www.actinri.org/About%20us.htm</a>).</p>	<p><b>Outreach:</b> ACT engages purely in outreach programs, meaning their instructors travel to other organizations and institutions to teach, rather than having students come to them. This way, they are able to reach people all over the state of Rhode Island, and even in Massachusetts and Connecticut.</p> <p><b>Production Assistant:</b> Staff that is hired to be with children when they're off stage. They help them with their lines and generally supervise them.</p>

## Community MusicWorks (CMW), Providence, Rhode Island

Description/history of Program	Mission Statement	Key terms/Vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded in 1997</li> <li>• Consists of a permanent residency of the Providence String Quartet who give individual and group lessons in the violin, viola or cello</li> <li>• The musicians perform in the community, serve as mentors and arrange musical events for children and their families</li> <li>• Programs include small group lessons, musical workshops where students interact with musicians from diverse musical backgrounds, community performance parties where students and faculty perform for local communities, and concert trips for families where free tickets and transportation are provided for students and their families to attend concerts of the Rhode Island Philharmonic and other organizations</li> </ul>	<p>“...To create a cohesive urban community through music education and performance that transforms the lives of children, families, and musicians. At the center of this mission are the teaching, mentoring, program design, and performance activities of the Providence String Quartet” (<a href="http://www.communitymusicworks.org/">http://www.communitymusicworks.org/</a>).</p>	<p><b>Facilitator:</b> A consultant who runs sessions involving Phase II students, where the students identify and discuss issues they want to address. Students’ goals are also discussed. The facilitator has organized a camping trip for students in which these discussions were continued.</p> <p><b>Phase II:</b> “Once students have been involved with Community MusicWorks for three years, they become involved in Phase II, an opportunity to hone their musical skills while developing a close-knit group of peers. This program combines more advanced musical activities with weekend retreats and discussions about the issues facing today's teens, deepening the students' dialogue about the world around them through conversation with their mentors and peers”</p> <p><b>Board:</b> meets to discuss program, consists of students and parents</p> <p><b>Parent Council:</b> parents who contact other parents about events</p>

**Green Street Arts Center** (GSAC), after-school programs, Middletown, Connecticut

Description/history of Program	Mission Statement	Key terms/Vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After-school program began in 2005</li> <li>• A community center where children can go after school to take a variety of arts classes</li> <li>• Instruction provided in recorder, West African dance, poetry, and other arts</li> <li>• Homework tutoring is offered</li> <li>• Most children go five days a week, although there are some who come less regularly</li> <li>• Students arrive based upon when school is dismissed and arrangements are made with Middletown Public Schools to drop them off right at the center</li> <li>• GSAC is based on the HOT schools model, a program initiated by the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism</li> </ul>	<p>“...To serve as a cultural and educational resource for community residents of all ages, particularly children, and to develop their talents, skills and abilities. The Center will present programs and events that reflect the wide spectrum of visual and performing arts as well as the diversity of the neighborhood itself. In addition, the Center will serve as an anchor to the revitalization of the North End of Middletown by promoting the social and cultural well-being of North End families and by attracting increased residential, commercial, and entrepreneurial activity in the neighborhood” (brochure).</p>	<p><b>HOT (Higher Order Thinking) Model:</b>            “In a HOT School, teaching for understanding assumes more importance than schedules, educators welcome parents into the school, and teachers flex the curriculum to meet the learner's needs. The HOT Schools Program arrives at child-centered education through a cluster of strategies which stimulate change in the school’s culture-- its symbols, its myths and its set of educational expectations, both for students and teachers”            (<a href="http://www.ctarts.org/hot/whatshot.htm">http://www.ctarts.org/hot/whatshot.htm</a>)</p> <p><b>Town Meeting:</b> A weekly meeting open to parents and the community in which students works are showcased</p>

## Neighborhood Music School (NMS), New Haven, Connecticut

Description/history of Program	Mission Statement	Key terms/Vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established in 1911</li> <li>• Runs a weekly program on Saturdays targeted towards “at-risk” youth and their parents, which offers tuition-free instruction in instruments, changing the instrument every four weeks, as well as visual arts classes, which are conducted at a facility next door, Creative Arts</li> <li>• Participants are given the opportunity to enroll in the tuition-based classes with financial aid</li> <li>• Tuition-based classes offer a variety of dance, music, drama and other tuition-based classes</li> </ul>	<p>“Our school provides an environment and program which joins people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds and financial circumstances in joyful and enriching opportunities for music and dance. NMS is a place where creativity and musicality are encouraged and where concentration, commitment and collaboration are fostered”</p> <p>(<a href="http://www.nmsmusicschool.org/">http://www.nmsmusicschool.org/</a>).</p>	<p><b>Parent Coordinator:</b> A liaison between parents and the organization</p> <p><b>PACK:</b> Parents and Communities for Kids. Its goal is to improve the availability of out of school learning opportunities for children and families</p> <p>(<a href="http://www.wallacefoundation.org/WF/GrantsPrograms/FocusAreasPrograms/Out-Of-SchoolLearning/PackProgram.htm">http://www.wallacefoundation.org/WF/GrantsPrograms/FocusAreasPrograms/Out-Of-SchoolLearning/PackProgram.htm</a>)</p> <p><b>Measurement of Joy:</b> A survey completed by an outside observer, assessing how engaged children are during lessons</p>

**Oddfellows Playhouse (ODDF)**, Neighborhood Troupes program, Middletown Connecticut.

Description/history of Program	Mission Statement	Key terms/Vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A weekly after-school program, founded in 1988</li> <li>• Serves “at-risk” youth from low-income housing neighborhoods of Middletown, currently the Maplewood Terrace and Chatham Court neighborhoods</li> <li>• Classes provided include theater, arts and crafts, and the history of hip-hop</li> <li>• Minority cultures are explored and celebrated, confidence and self-expression are developed, and these classes are supposed to serve as gateways to other classes and productions</li> <li>• Troupe sizes are capped at 12-15, and there are typically three TAs and one lead teacher per class</li> </ul>	<p>“To Promote the growth of young people—in skills, knowledge, and self-confidence—through the performing arts” (brochure).</p>	<p><b>Troupes:</b> Term for the program geared towards “at-risk” youth. The current troupes include the Maplewood tiny troupe for 5-7 year olds, the Maplewood junior troupe for 8-9 year olds, the Maplewood middle troupe for 10-12 year olds, the Maplewood senior troupe for 12 and up, and two troupes for youth from Chatham Court for ages 8-11, and 12 and up</p>

## Raw Art Works (RAW), Lynn, Massachusetts

Description/history of Program	Mission Statement	Key terms/Vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded in 1988</li> <li>• An after-school based arts program that uses art therapy techniques to address personal and community issues</li> <li>• Open to anyone in and around Lynn</li> <li>• In addition to arts instruction, a space for kids to hang out is provided</li> </ul> <p>Programs include Real to Reel, where students learn how to become independent filmmakers, Art Tag, where art is created by students from one school to be installed in another school, Men 2 Be where adolescent boys from public housing in middle school use art as a means to explore becoming men, and more</p>	<p>“Raw Art Works uses the arts to nurture the untapped creativity of ‘youth in the struggle.’ We give them tools to embrace their innate capacity to create and to ignite their own power to change their life” (<a href="http://www.rawart.org/">http://www.rawart.org/</a>).</p> <p>Motto: No mistakes, Just art.</p>	<p><b>RAW Chiefs:</b> Teen Peer Leaders who are chosen through interviews and who collaborate with RAW art therapists in leading groups. They are also trained as leaders and artists and participate in weekly RAW Chief meetings</p> <p><b>Raw Therapists:</b> Art therapists who run classes at RAW</p> <p><b>Lounge:</b> A program in which career and college advice is given</p> <p><b>RARE (Responsible, Accountable, and Really striving for Excellence) Kid:</b> Children within each group vote on who in their group they think has been exceptional</p> <p><b>Van-Go:</b> A program where students at RAW go to places in the community such as baseball games or the YMCA and face-paint</p>

## **I. Program Design and Execution**

### **People involved in Program Design**

Programs range from giving almost complete control to instructors to having more collaboration between instructors and program directors, to still others that rely on some input from children attending the programs. RAW relies on input from its RAW chiefs, who have the opportunity to propose activities in classrooms. One RAW chief described how she came up with a game in order to have a girl in her group open up about her problems. Oddfellows added a class on the history of hip-hop after students responded very positively to a visiting instructor. *An elaboration on the varying degrees of student/teacher/parent input will be addressed in the Program Assessment section.*

### **Discipline**

Discipline is an issue any child-oriented organization deals with, and the organizations we researched are no exception. We found similar methods of discipline amongst individual teachers as well as organizations as a whole. These methods can be tied to two out of the “three Rs” discussed by Heath (1999): rules and roles. Heath’s third R, risk, did not apply to the topic of discipline. However, we discovered our own “R” to be added to the list—respect.

#### *Rules*

A ritual most organizations share is having the children come up with the classroom rules on the first day of each class. This way the students not only feel empowered but are also more likely to follow rules and accept the consequences for breaking these rules. An instructor at ACT explained that teachers should make sure the students come up with all the necessary rules, but the children should feel they generated them. Furthermore, organizations need to demonstrate that they are serious about rules, and make no exceptions. A director at Green Street Arts Center explained how they decided to dismiss a student after repeated disruptive behavior. While unfortunate, it sent a message to other students that rules were not to be taken lightly.

#### *Roles*

Organizations emphasized cultivating a sense of responsibility and roles in their students. Both ACT and RAW reward their students for behaving well and being productive. At ACT, there is a philosophy of not having auditions for their plays. Instead, people earn their parts through showing they are good community members and they are prepared. At RAW there is the

idea of a RARE (Responsible, Accountable, and Really striving for Excellence) kid. Students within each class vote on one person they feel respect for and who does his/her work efficiently. That person becomes the RARE kid.

### *Respect*

In the interviews, all organizations emphasized respect. Each agrees that children need to be treated with respect, and in turn the children are expected to show respect. One way in which teachers demonstrate respect is by holding everyone to the same standards. An instructor from ACT explained that in some of her classes with integrated populations, such as children with learning disabilities amongst other children, she will not “go easy” on the children with the learning disabilities. As she put it, “You don’t let anyone get away with something more than anyone else.” Everyone has to follow the same rules and risk the same consequences for breaking rules.

Another indication of showing respect is to never yell or scream when trying to control kids. An instructor at Oddfellows was adamant that not only does this never work, it also shows little respect for the students.

The most successful organizations are ones that are able to induce a feeling of mutual respect between students and teachers. This way the instructors are taken seriously, and children gain a sense of empowerment and are more productive.

### **Integration**

Most organizations deal with subgroups of their student population into two categories that can be thought of as more “at-risk” and less “at-risk.” We examined whether organizations attempted to integrate these populations, their reasons behind integration or segregation, and their methods of integration.

Community MusicWorks, Oddfellows’ Neighborhood Troupes program, and Neighborhood Music School are programs designed to serve particular geographic neighborhoods. As a result, there is little integration with children from other neighborhoods. At CMW and Oddfellows there is a requirement that you are a resident of a specific neighborhood.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Because of the transient nature of the community with which they work, Oddfellows allows children to continue participating in the Neighborhood Troupes Program even if they have moved away from the neighborhood.

Differing slightly, the staff at RAW explained, “There is no economic boundary,” meaning anyone can sign up for any class. However, because they recruit most heavily in Lynn, there is little integration with youth from other neighborhoods.

Although Oddfellows targets “at-risk” youth in its Neighborhood Troupes program, it also runs programs open to everyone. Oddfellows’ ultimate goal is to integrate Troupes students into other programs. First however, both populations (students in the Neighborhood Troupes program, and tuition-paying students) need to be ready for integration. “Ready” implies that students will look upon integration positively and also understand potential dangers, such as forming stereotypes. It is inevitably tricky to determine when students are “ready.” As explained by a director at Oddfellows, “...the worst is to have one black kid who is rambunctious and crazy in a class of all white kids—‘cause stereotypes form.” There is a danger that stereotypes will be reified rather than challenged because people’s selective perceptions cause them to view “social problems as the product of individual character deficiencies” (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Raskoff, 1994: 250).

Green Street Arts Center, whose student population overlaps that of Oddfellows’, is attempting to directly integrate the two populations Oddfellows has struggled to bring together. At GSAC, the original plan was to have 45 students who are residents of the North End (a low-income area) and 45 students from anywhere else in Middletown. However, so far, predominately students from the North End have enrolled in classes and very few students from elsewhere in Middletown have enrolled. Because GSAC is such a new organization, it is difficult to tell at this time whether integration will work.

In addition to integration amongst neighborhoods, one organization has had success in other types of integration. ACT has successfully integrated older and younger populations together, as well as disabled children with non-disabled children. The success of the latter type of integration usually lies in the class getting together and discussing the best way to approach issues that may come up. A program director from ACT gave an example of one child in such a discussion suggesting in regards to another child, “she has trouble staying in her spot, so maybe if I hold her hand, she’ll stay in her spot.”

Based on the previous examples, we have found two main philosophies surrounding the dangers and benefits of integration.

(1) **The dangers of integration.** On the one hand, serving “at-risk” youth means directing a program in response to the specific needs of the students placed under this (variably-defined) label. Furthermore, there is the danger that “at-risk” youth might feel uncomfortable amongst children who do not share similar concerns. There is also a risk of stereotypes being formed and reinforced by both groups.

(2) **The benefits of integration.** On the other hand, integration is good preparation for the “real world.” At ACT staff stressed the importance of having mixed-gender classes because that’s how situations at public school would most likely be. The same argument can be made of people from different racial/ethnic and economic backgrounds. A program director from Oddfellows stated that integration is the ultimate goal, and implied that this is because all children involved would benefit from such an arrangement. Similarly, a teacher from CMW insisted that interacting with people from different backgrounds (be they teachers or students) helps to “give a confidence going out into the world.”

### **Unique (program design) characteristics**

We have found unique features of each organization that work well and could be applied to other arts organizations for children. Some of these features are discussed in more detail in other parts of the report; an overview is provided here.

#### *Empowerment*

The importance of giving youth a feeling of empowerment and control within organizations is stressed in much of the literature. All organizations we researched strive towards this, but some excel. As mentioned above, most organizations allow participants to come up with their own rules. It is suggested that when children come up with their own rules, they are more likely to follow them and to accept being held accountable when breaking them.

RAW creates a sense of empowerment through recruiting older youth from the neighborhood as leaders. In their RAW Chief Program, older children from the community are selected into the program through interviews. RAW selects these leaders carefully, making sure they can make the necessary time and emotional commitment. RAW chiefs have two significant impacts on the program. First of all, the RAW chiefs themselves gain an incredible amount of self-esteem and feeling of empowerment. This impacts the other students who look towards them as mentors and role models. Secondly, because RAW chiefs are from the community, other

children feel they can relate to them and turn to them. One RAW Chief described, "...I have a girl in my group, and she calls me with her problems. I talk to most of them outside of RAW. They all tell me their problems. They all call me."

### *Pink Octopus*

Another distinction that can be made between organizations in this study is the control they give kids over their program environments. Some allow youth to decorate the space. When RAW was asked to explain why there was a pink octopus painted on the floor, RAW told the story of a student who accidentally spilled paint. Rather than trying to clean the paint up, people transformed it into a pink octopus. A conclusion drawn from our research is that by giving children control over how their environment looks, the space becomes their own and they feel more comfortable being there. Indeed, RAW children feel comfortable just dropping in and hanging out, even when they have no classes. According to a RAW Chief, some parents will tell their children to go to RAW when they have nothing to do at home. Kids feel so comfortable at RAW that they consider it a resource for projects unrelated to RAW, and use materials from RAW for these projects.

### *Discussion*

Community MusicWorks has a consultant of sorts called the facilitator. He runs sessions involving Phase II students (students who have reached a certain level of proficiency), and has them identify community issues they want to discuss and address. Examples of issues range from squirrels to drugs, and police brutality to pregnancy. At these sessions, they also talk about goals and about success and what it means to the students. The facilitator organizes camping retreats where the discussion is continued. Essentially the facilitator facilitates discussion.

Similarly, RAW Chiefs facilitate discussion. RAW Chiefs meet up with their groups once a week and discuss topics ranging from classes to life in general. While the art therapist supervises, RAW Chiefs have a certain degree of control over what happens in these sessions. Because of their closeness with other students, RAW Chiefs are able to think of innovative ways for people to open up about their problems and issues.

### *Behavior*

ACT has found that by mixing age groups, older kids curb their "inappropriate" behaviors to set examples for younger kids, as well as take upon themselves the roles of mentors. Staff described how older kids act "goofier," avoid using foul language and tone down their

physical display of affection because of the presence of younger children. By the same token, younger children look up to older youth as role models.

#### *Parent Involvement*

Parent involvement is an issue many organizations struggle with. Although each organization has come up with its own attempts at solutions, Neighborhood Music School has a truly unique approach. As a PACK organization, NMS requires that parents attend with their children. Children of parents who refuse to come for whatever reason cannot attend. *Please refer to the Parent and Community Involvement section for more information.*

#### *Variety*

Having a variety of activities can contribute to the success of a program. Oddfellows has recognized the benefits of new classes through their addition of a History of Hip-Hop class based upon desires of students. NMS offers incredible variety in the instruments they teach, which change every four weeks. We inferred they do this to keep up the participants' interests and also because their ultimate goal is to spark interest in music, rather than gaining proficiency in an instrument. RAW also has a variety of activity options, including painting, video production, and 3-D art.

#### *Preparation for the Future*

Some organizations stress the importance of helping their participants prepare for the future. For instance, RAW has a program called "Lounge", in which the therapists help kids with job applications, health insurance and other matters. The program is run weekly and is open to all high school juniors and seniors. Experts are hired to come give advice about writing resumes, applying to college, and more.

### **Summary**

General descriptions of each organization are provided in tables at the beginning of this section. They serve as introductions to the organizations and can be referred to at any time when reading this report. The remainder of this section is outlined below:

- The people involved in program design differ from program to program-- from almost purely instructors to students, administrators, parents and more.
- Various methods of discipline are used at each organization. These can be categorized into rules, roles and respect. Rules are generated by students and followed without

exception. A sense of responsibility is cultivated in students, and a general atmosphere of mutual respect is created.

- Dangers of integration lie in stereotypes being created or affirmed and benefits lie in enhanced learning experiences for everyone involved and a more accurate representation of people's day-to-day lives
- Each organization has unique characteristics that help make them successful. These include the RAW Chief program, the facilitator at CMW, kids' control of their environment, integration of age groups, and a variety of activities

## **II. Staffing**

Programs agreed that understaffing is a common hindrance to nonprofit arts-based programs: because programs are run on such tight budgets, staff numbers are minimal. Programs have varying methods of tackling understaffing issues. Most of the programs we looked at are run like an ensemble, with all staff members contributing to the decision-making and execution of tasks.

### **Professionalism**

Because each program has its own mission statement, it makes sense that each program holds different views as to what makes an ideal arts instructor. Some programs emphasized the need for highly trained and professional staff, while others insisted that an enthusiastic attitude and a knack for working with kids is more important than artistic skills. When asked what RAW looks for in an art therapist, the director explained that all of their art therapists are both strong artists and strong therapists, normally required to have an MA in art therapy. After looking at how different programs responded to the question of professionalism versus positive attitude, it is clear that a balance between artistic skills and people skills is essential in a good arts instructor.

Both Oddfellows and GSAC explained that good teaching skills, a good attitude, and a joy for working with kids is more important than a teacher's professional skill level. When discussing the traits of a good teacher, the Oddfellows program manager said that the most important thing is having "someone who is a good person and you can tweak the rest." The director of GSAC responded to this question by saying that he is "looking for passion and

enthusiasm, with a skills set towards the bottom of the list.” These values of teaching reflect GSAC’s role as a community center. The center mainly tries to provide constructive and fun activities for kids with opportunities to engage in art. The other programs, however, seemed to demand more out of their teachers artistically.

Community MusicWorks demands professional training of its four music teachers, who have formed a string quartet together. All the musicians except one came from music conservatories. The program thus has professional musicians working with urban youth, providing rigorous training for the children on four different instruments. By using such highly trained musicians, CMW sets high expectations and brings a sense of professionalism that is often not available to the youth it serves. The CMW director explained, “We have the feeling in some cases in the performing arts world that there’s a distinction between a community artist and a professional artist and we’re trying to break down that distinction here and say in fact what’s powerful here is the synergy between the professional artist and a community.” The director explained that the relationship between the professional musicians and the students is beneficial to both parties. The musicians “learn a lot and can improve a lot from the excitement and energy that kids bring to this.” At the same time a student learning to play will get a lot from seeing her teachers performing at a high level. Providing children with professionally trained teachers encourages them to set high expectations for the students and demands high standards of student training and performing. According CMW’s director, the kids flourish and rise to the occasion with this type of training. Hiring professional musicians can be difficult, however, as they may demand higher pay than other arts teachers. The director says that he can’t compete with professional symphonies where starting salaries are 80 to 100,000 dollars, but he has found great musicians by providing health care and a reasonable wage.

RAW also demands that teachers provide high levels of arts instruction to its students. A RAW art therapist emphasized if kids see a teacher putting in high levels of work, they too will put in a high level of effort: “If you make paper clip sculptures, they better be cool ‘cause the kids need that.” He explained that this goes for all staff involved: “You have to be willing to get your hands dirty, and that goes for office managers too....You have to be willing to get things going.” At RAW, the art therapists maintain a serious tone in terms of doing art and the kids respond well to it. The art therapist explained that kids are expected to get involved and “step it up” when they walk through the RAW doors. “If you wanna be here, you have to be serious.”

This approach has worked for RAW, as more and more kids want to sign up every year after hearing about it from their friends. Inspired in this manner, the kids work hard and produce impressive and meaningful art.

### **Honesty and Equality**

Besides the degree of training a teacher has in an art form, the programs listed various traits that are essential to a good teacher. A recurring value was honesty with the kids. Most of the programs insisted that teachers must be up front with the children. A RAW therapist said that this is a matter of listening to what the kids bring them and knowing how to respond. Teachers, he explained, must be aware of their mistakes and they must be good at (1) saying that they messed up and (2) looking ahead to see how to fix it. We also talked to a RAW Chief to get a student's perspective. When asked what makes the best teacher, the RAW Chief responded, "One who's straight up with you. Who says, 'chill, stop, do you know what you are doing?' ... The ones who give you good comments but who then will give you bad comments, too. They...will also tell you what's up." A director from Oddfellows believes that teachers must hold everyone to the same standards—demanding that "when you're here and in our house there are basic rules you have to follow." Setting clear guidelines and holding kids accountable for them reinforces the idea that everyone is held to the same standards.

Along with honesty, it is important for teachers to provide lesson plans with structure. According to one ODDF program director, kids respond well to structure. A teacher must be organized and have coherent lesson plans, so that the kids know what to expect. When kids know what to expect out of a class, they can develop a clear set of goals, work toward success and achieve it.

### **Role Models**

Another essential aspect of teaching is being a good role model for the students. Because all the programs we looked at work in low-income areas with a high percentage of people of color, a few of the programs stressed that hiring people of color is extremely important. The director of Oddfellows' Neighborhood Troupes program stressed that it is important to hire at least one or two teachers who are Latino or African American. She also noted that Oddfellows looks for strong males to fill their positions. Oddfellows' program manager explained their

policy: “It’s a very isolated community--they associate certain things with white people--they see them as their teachers.” Teachers serve as role models, so kids should see people of color in those positions. Two staff members of RAW also agreed that it is important to hire strong males that are minorities. We inferred that programs favored hiring men because they particularly want to provide good role models to the boys that attend their programs. Traditionally, there has been a notable presence of female teaching staff that serve as role models, and so programs want to provide more strong male role models for the children. Unlike the other programs, The Neighborhood Music School does not actively try to employ minorities in its program. According to a flute teacher from NMS, one of the teachers able to engage the children the most is a white woman who teaches recorder. She believes that it is more important that a teacher has an enthusiastic and understanding attitude toward the children. All things being equal, it seems to us important for the organizations to consider the question of role models and the potential importance of providing children with male and female role models who breach the stereotypes of whites always teaching people of color. It is particularly important to hire people of color with strong artistic skills. Seeing teachers of color who are professional artists provides messages that students of color can also reach a high level of achievement. Students are reminded that they can be ambitious, regardless of race.

### **Parents and Community Members as Staff**

Hiring parents to do various jobs within programs has been important for certain organizations in promoting parent involvement and building strong ties to the community. The Green Street Arts Center employs parents to work at the front desk in the hub of the arts center. These parents do mostly administrative work. GSAC, which charges a small sum to all kids that take part in the program, offers parents the opportunity to work for a small amount of time to pay off the sum charged. The arts center involves parents in the program, and gives them a sense that they own a part of the agency for the service they have performed. Hiring a parent coordinator has been extremely important to the Neighborhood Music School. Two staff members that were interviewed separately described the parent coordinator as the heartbeat of the program. *Refer to the parent and community involvement section for more on parent coordinators and hiring parents.*

When asked about hiring community members, most programs said they would if they have the opportunity, but they haven't received many applicants. We urge programs to make active efforts to hire community members, as they can serve as great role models to children and connect with them deeply. At the same time, however, programs must be careful about hiring people from the neighborhoods being served, as is true of any local organization. Community members can also come in with preconceived judgments of youth involved, and this replicates stereotypes and assumptions about the children. ACT recalled a time when they were working with community center with staff from the neighborhoods the kids were from. The ACT teachers wanted to give the kids scripts to take home but the community staff wouldn't allow it because they didn't trust the kids to bring the scripts back. The ACT staff handed out the scripts secretly, and all the children returned them. When hiring community members, one has to be careful in the selection process and put them through extensive interviews (just like hiring any other staff member). RAW does this with the Chiefs as they put applicants through long interviews and try to find out how the potential RAW Chiefs will respond to their peers before choosing. Most programs favor hiring community members when possible, but they must be as careful in their selection process as they are with any other applicants.

### **The Role of Children**

A few of the programs we studied also give kids the opportunities to fill roles of responsibility and even work for the agency. Providing kids with responsible roles is important in engaging them and is one of the "3 R's" that Heath stresses is crucial to program success. Giving kids decision-making roles in program development and execution engages them more fully in a program. In their study of 120 community-based arts programs, Heath and Soep (1998) found that involving students in all aspects of program workings is extremely important. At Community MusicWorks, some kids serve on the board that oversees the agency. The children represent their peers and are able to express their voice when decisions must be made. RAW even goes a step further and gives high school students the opportunity to run small youth groups and serve as mentors through the RAW Chiefs program. The RAW Chiefs even work during the summer and are paid during these sessions, but not paid during the school year. As was discussed earlier, the RAW Chiefs program is demanding of the Chiefs, and requires them to put in a great deal of time and passion. RAW sets high standards for its Chiefs and inspires them

to work hard, which further inspires the middle school students the Chiefs work with. The RAW Chiefs program helps to promote student involvement in the program design and execution. Paying the Chiefs over the summer reinforces the importance of their jobs and their role at RAW. The RAW director explained student involvement at RAW: “What makes RAW successful is that the kids feel that they are part of it, they own part of it, if they make a mess, it’s their job to clean it. If they succeed it’s their job to enjoy it, if they mess up it’s their job to hold each other accountable.” RAW is a prime example of how kids can be incorporated into staffing and roles of responsibility in arts based after school programs.

### **Summary**

- Professional staff vs. staff that works well with kids: It is important to have a professional staff, highly trained in an art form. Having professional artists teaching young children is less important, but can still be quite beneficial. Teachers serve as role models in the art form they teach. Teachers with professional skills in an art inspire children to set high standards for themselves. In order to provide role models that children can connect with, it is important to hire people of color and men, as they are traditionally underrepresented as staff members of programs such as these.
- The most important teaching skill is being honest with the kids: Teachers need to set standards and hold everyone to them. The RAW chief acknowledged this when she said that kids need to be told when they’re doing something wrong; she implied that kids are aware of this honesty and respond well to straightforwardness.
- It is important to give kids and parents roles of responsibility-- on a board, as parent coordinators, or using the kids directly as arts instructors. In general, if programs want more involvement from kids and parents, it is important to give them responsibilities and provide them with a sense that they are a part of the execution and decision making. This interactive relationship makes them feel they are more a part of the agency: The agency serves the kids/parents and they serve the agency.

### **III. Program Assessment**

Program Assessment is an essential component of all organizations, though it is even more necessary for nonprofit organizations where outside funding relies on the program meeting

certain assessment standards, or “measurable outcomes” (Bedwell). In the case of child-centered organizations, program assessment often is equated with assessment of student progress through various means. In after-school arts-based programs, these assessments can be implemented through various voices including students (past or present), teachers, teaching assistants, parents, and outside observers. Below, we will examine both the methods of assessment (both of the program and of the students) and the motivations behind these methodologies.

### **Methods of Assessment: Internal Voices**

The most easily obtained assessments are those done by program participants: students, teachers, and teaching assistants. Within this internal community, standardized written methods of assessment, most frequently in the form of surveys, are often required of all participants. At Oddfellows, teachers are only paid after turning in weekly assessment forms evaluating their lesson and student responses. Additionally, students at Oddfellows are required to fill out surveys evaluating both the teachers and the program twice a year.

Community MusicWorks takes these student evaluations a step further. In addition to asking students to evaluate the program, CMW uses these surveys to measure student “progress” by asking them questions about their outlook on life, such as where students would like to go to college. Furthermore, CMW requests that all students fill out an “exit survey” before they leave, to explain exactly why they are leaving.

While RAW, like all of the other programs, has students fill out written evaluations, these evaluations are extended to include journals and other creative outlets that can be used to assess the program. One program director commented, “We have the kids do a lot of writing—writing down in journals, write notes, track their own goals, a lot of kids in the group are tracking certain goals that they track for themselves and/or the therapists set for them.” This allows students an outlet for their feelings concerning the program, but it also provides them a structured way to create and monitor short and long-term goals, and permits RAW to see if their program has helped enable their students to reach these goals.

Many programs have adopted set models of assessment, such as Oddfellows’ use of the logic model—a flow chart that provides numerous “pathways” to success<sup>7</sup>. Though these standardized evaluations provide a vital statistical basis for funding, our study has found that

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix F for example of logic model.

verbal assessment has proven to be even more beneficial for internal assessment. Whereas teachers and teaching assistants often have formal meetings to discuss “what’s working and what’s not,” students in most of the programs we researched openly convey their feelings in the less-formal classroom setting.<sup>8</sup> One Oddfellows teacher insisted that this communication is necessary to keep the classroom going: “Especially when you teach children, if you have a program going and the kids aren’t enjoying it, if they’re not having fun, then they’re not responding, not producing, then the teacher needs to take heed of that, and you can point blank ask them what they like to do and then formulate some plans around that.” Another teacher explains how at Oddfellows, kids are not afraid to speak their minds. She takes advantage of their loquacious nature by having them assess specific performances in order to improve programming for future shows: “We do a lot of talking, you know after the show, we’ll watch the video and do ‘what worked and what didn’t work’ and what could we do differently and what we will do differently next year. They’re very vocal and definitely very willing to express their dislike for things.”

A key component of successful program assessment is not only to have the students assess the program: changes must be *implemented* based on those assessments. As one RAW therapist summarizes, “It’s about how we *hear* [the kids] and then how we *respond*.” For example, CMW has implemented significant changes in their program design based on both the formal and informal suggestions of their students. Students give suggestions during meetings, surveys, and class. As a result, snack time was added into CMW’s program schedule, as well as a half hour of free time before the start of class to socialize. This allowed the students to expend extra energy and catch up with friends before settling down to work—an idea that worked brilliantly.

Besides student voice, there are various other internal voices that must be involved in Program Assessment. The programs we researched have very similar methods for teacher assessment sheets. They require teachers to fill out reports for each class period documenting what had occurred with their lesson plan and with the students. In addition to these reports, teacher meetings are held frequently in order to assess the program’s success. The programs that employ teaching assistants also ask that these assistants fill out annual assessment papers.

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<sup>8</sup> Community MusicWorks has also conducted formal, intensive interviews with students in order to gauge their opinion on what works and what doesn’t for various projects.

The only program that employs a distinctly different form of teaching assessment is the RAW Chief program. Because of the intensity of this program, and because these ‘Chiefs’ are used in place of teaching assistants, their voices are taken very seriously. One RAW Chief emphasized that the therapists continuously sought out her opinion, trusting her judgment on what would work best with the students considering she was their age. In addition to this informal assessment of classroom projects, RAW sets up focus groups amongst teachers, chiefs, and students to identify classroom issues and reflect on what is working and what is not.

### **Methods of Assessment: External Voices**

The voice of parents is one external voice critical to program assessment. While all of the programs attempt some form of parental assessment, written evaluations have often proven futile. Staff members from both Oddfellows and ACT lament the fact that surveys are frequently issued to parents and then never returned. At Oddfellows, program managers have finally resorted to visiting parents and issuing the survey face-to-face; however, this endeavor is obviously time consuming. ACT *does* obtain a successful response rate in some pre-course surveys sent out to parents. In these surveys, parents are asked to state one specific goal for their child. These goals are then reviewed by the staff and lead to individual assessment of each child. However, ACT bemoans that, often, the parents who take the time to fill out these goal-oriented surveys are not the parents who they seek to reach the most.

The two programs most successful in parent assessment are the two programs focused intensely on parent involvement: NMS and CMW. These programs, which require parents to sign a contract promising various levels of involvement, organize mandatory parent meetings, parent-to-parent phone calls, and parent focus groups. CMW takes it even further by organizing a parent advisory board. While NMS does not have a parent advisory board established, regular “talk-back sessions” take place between parents and instructors during snack time.

NMS extends external assessment to include commentary by an outside observer who enters into the various classrooms to watch the children and completes a survey, the “Measurement of Joy” (See Appendix F). This external observation allows for an unbiased view of the classroom, where the observer assesses physical factors used to indicate if a child is engaged in the lesson.

A final external observation, though infrequent, comes from past students. Although Oddfellows, ACT, and RAW spoke of informal follow-up with students (running into alumni around the town, or checking up on them through family members or by word-of-mouth), none of the organizations have set up formal alumni programs. Most of the organizations interviewed agree that this type of follow-up program would be beneficial, yet it would be difficult since the populations that they work with are transient. ACT is on the verge of creating an alumni club even though it is challenging, because ACT is often forbidden to know a student's contact information or to give out their own personal contact information.<sup>9</sup> As they attempt to create a functioning alumni program around these barriers, ACT emphasizes that students should always keep in contact by calling the ACT office.

### **Motivations Behind Methodology: What Is Success?**

A fascinating dichotomy was found between programs when the question of defining success was addressed in the interviews. While it must be made clear that no program was totally exclusive in its definition of success and all the organizations incorporated myriad definitions of success, programs were found to lean in different directions. On one end of the "success spectrum"<sup>10</sup> for arts-based after-school programs for "at-risk" youth is the idea that success is achieved if the program enables any positive change in the child's life. On the other end of the spectrum lies the idea that success for these programs can be measured by proficiency in the art form of choice. While the mission statements of Oddfellows and NMS fall closer to the former end of the spectrum, the mentalities of CMW and GSAC fall towards the latter end of the spectrum. RAW and ACT judged themselves most successful when they focused on falling in the middle of the success spectrum, incorporating elements from both sides.

Out of the six organizations interviewed, ODDF and NMS seemed to judge success on the broadest scope. They insisted that success was anything from stopping a child from crying to giving kids life-skills that will help them get through family crises to moving them into tuition-

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<sup>9</sup> This is due to the fact that some of the institutions in partnership with ACT do not allow their students to have contact with their parents; hence, ACT is not allowed to contact their parents either, or, in some cases, even know the students' last names.

<sup>10</sup> Spectrum invented by the research team. Not a recognized definition/tool in measuring success.

based classes to making them take pride in their work. One Oddfellows teacher emphasizes the importance of pride:

Success is understanding what the challenges for these kids will be in their future and being able to have some impact around that, and the first important thing...for me is pride. These kids need to understand how great they are, and that they are somebody special, and that they're not any label that anyone else has put on them... So to see themselves with more pride is what's telling me that I'm doing my job.

NMS's "Measurement of Joy" is an outsider's analysis of many similar traits of success, focusing on a child's physical motions that would signify taking ownership of and pride in his or her work.

CMW and GSAC, while obviously interested in enhancing numerous aspects of the child (demonstrated clearly in their respective programs involving community facilitators and "town meetings"<sup>11</sup>), place a stronger emphasis on judging success through the student's advancement in the artistic medium of choice. At GSAC, a young program that has yet to engage in formal assessment procedures, the program director predicts that the individual students will be assessed by comparing their musical or artistic abilities before and after the program: "Art production is going to be our number one way of evaluating—comparing art/musical ability, etc. at the beginning of the course, and at the end." It is interesting to note that as a young program, GSAC has not had the ability to measure success in this manner, and has thus far measured success through the behavior of the children, and how they have responded to discipline measures.

Music proficiency is also taken quite seriously at CMW. An artistic director and teacher at CMW explains how the discipline learned through strict music education can lead to self-imposed discipline in other areas: "One of the deeper layers of learning to play an instrument is really learning the discipline required and learning what it means to have continuity in the project you start." He continues, "The real hope is that someone will go off into their life after CMW and have a greater set of expectations and ambitions for themselves than they would have had previously had they not come in contact with CMW." As noted earlier, CMW hopes to measure the progression of these "expectations" through student assessment forms addressing outlooks on "life issues," as well as through the use of the facilitator.

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<sup>11</sup> Refer to Program Design for further description.

The philosophies behind RAW and ACT fall somewhere in the middle of the “success spectrum.” While one ACT instructor insists “It’s the process rather than the product,” another teacher assesses her students by testing the amount of vocabulary they have learned over the course of the class. A third teacher combines these two methods to allow her students to progress in various ways, while demanding that they take their work seriously and see it as important.

RAW has a similar emphasis on serious artwork. While its base in art therapy obviously focuses on addressing life issues *through* art, the actual art produced by RAW is of extremely high caliber. Most of RAW’s art projects are produced either for the outside community, such as being hired to make t-shirts, or will be seen by the outside community, in public spaces or in their open gallery. This community exposure helps the students to take pride in their work and recognize its power. More importantly, RAW students realize that their public persona can be changed through their artwork--one of the greatest successes of the program. One art therapist reports,

Some of these kids have come in and out of jail. If they can put their time into artistry, in something that is going to be seen, then their pride is amazing. For them to be seen in the community for something positive is huge. They are seen out in the community and they know they are doing something good.

It is interesting and necessary to note that Oddfellows judges the successes of its tuition-based students and its Neighborhood Troupes students differently. While the ‘Neighborhood’ kids are judged, as stated above, by their general progress in any of life’s endeavors, the tuition-based students are tested in their theater proficiency before and after taking the courses. One program director at Oddfellows admits that he now questions Oddfellows’ motives more seriously in this decision, and he is now looking at the implications of this dual treatment.

Winona Fletcher, a professor of theater and drama at IU Bloomington, argues,

Art should open our minds to other perspectives and other possibilities....I want my students to go out of my class with this purpose: that they find the best in themselves and find their own individuality, but also have sensitivity and respect for others’ individuality....One reward that comes from the theater is [that it can] provide enlightenment to break down the barriers and open the doors, to bring us all away from the edges toward a common ground. (Ehrlich, 1995:105)

As we have discussed earlier, integration of students from different backgrounds can be both beneficial and dangerous, yet, would it be dangerous to place the same measurements of success on all students? Or, is it true instead that, in order to eventually reach a “common ground,” we

must, in the process, have different standards of success for different groups? Finally, who has the right to decide what constitutes these different standards? These are questions that many of the organizations researched continue to struggle with.

### **Summary**

- Numerous voices are involved with program assessment. *Internal voices* include students, teachers, and teaching assistants, whereas *external voices* include parents, outside observers from the community, and former students.
- Methods of program assessment include *formal methods* of evaluation (surveys, written evaluations, student journals, organized group meetings, and parent phone calls) as well as *informal methods* of evaluation (classroom discussions; students, teaching assistants, and parents voicing their opinions in a less formal setting.)
- In programs that deal primarily with children, evaluating the program often goes hand in hand with evaluating the progress of the children involved. Because of this, in assessing the success of their programs, organizations have had to deal with the question of defining success.
- In comparing how the various organizations researched choose to measure success, a spectrum has appeared. At one end of this spectrum lies the idea that success is measured by visible improvement in one's proficiency in an art form at the other end judging success by measuring a student's progress in *any* aspect of life. While the six organizations fall on different points of the spectrum, all seek to employ a combination of these two ideas at various levels.
- Following the ideas behind the different ways to measure success, it is important that organizations seriously consider whether it is beneficial to judge different students by different measurements of success.

### **IV. Parent and Community Involvement**

Parent and community involvement has been a serious concern for most of the after-school arts-based programs we've researched. While there are parents who will come to every event, a majority of parents are not showing up to events or supporting their children in their artistic endeavors. Parental involvement is crucial in building a child's skills in the arts, whether

it includes encouraging practice at home or allowing the child to attend class; their presence and support also plays a part in developing self-esteem and confidence. Parent involvement contributes enormously to the success of a program and so is a high priority for many of these programs.

Getting parents to show their support for the children involved in the program has proved difficult for several reasons. Work schedules, language differences, understaffing, and a lack of trust in the organization have all been barriers to greater parent involvement. These issues have been tackled in a variety of different ways by the organizations we've talked to, and employing a combination of these strategies will likely improve parent and community involvement significantly.

### **Work Schedules**

Work schedules have posed one of the biggest problems deterring parents from getting involved in these after-school programs. Oddfellows Playhouse, Raw Art Works, and Community MusicWorks have all highlighted parents' busy work schedules as an issue they attempt to address. Many low-income parents work long hours, off hours, or several jobs to support themselves and their families, and either the work itself conflicts with performances or classes, or they need to take that time to do other errands. RAW also noted that many of the parents in the neighborhood it serves are immigrants and possibly illegal, so missing work to attend functions could result in a lost job with no other employment opportunities.

Organizations have attempted to tackle these work conflicts in several ways. Neighborhood Music School holds its classes on Saturdays in the hopes that more parents can attend on the weekend. Community MusicWorks held parent focus groups to identify issues that they might be having, and the focus group suggested a change in the time of events so more parents could attend. Now their organization schedules lessons to overlap different work shifts. GSAC schedules its town meetings at 5:30PM in hopes that more parents can attend. It also plans on scheduling meetings with parents four times a year in order to keep the parent updated on the child and the program. These meetings will be individually scheduled, allowing the parent to find a time that works for him or her.

Location of events can also factor into the equation. CMW holds lessons at community centers within the communities that it serves, making it easier for parents to pick up their

children and get involved. GSAC is also located in the neighborhood it serves, making it easier for parents or other community members to drop by. Oddfellows actually brings many of the events to the communities themselves to increase the parent and community involvement. Its most successful events include Fiesta, a neighborhood block party, and a gift drive in the neighborhood. These events allow the parents to save time by simply coming out of their houses or answering their doors.

The common thread seems to be finding ways to accommodate a busy work schedule and making events more accessible to parents. Focus groups where parents and organizations discuss how to make events successful in terms of parent involvement seem to be an effective approach to the issue.

### **Language**

Language has also been a barrier in communication with parents. Neighborhood Music School, RAW, and All Children's Theatre have emphasized how differences in language affect communication and also contributes to a lower level of trust in the organization. Taking the time to translate things like flyers or newsletters becomes important, yet the issue of understaffing many times conflicts with the need for translation.

The first major technique employed by organizations dealing with this language barrier is to translate any information about program events. To take it a step further, Neighborhood Music has a parent and community member on staff to make phone calls. This parent speaks Spanish fluently, and so can clearly communicate with Spanish-speaking parents who might not be able to clearly understand other staff members.

### **Understaffing**

Communicating with parents and the community demands a significant amount of time on the part of the staff. Often, staff members' time is spread thinly across teaching classes and attempting to stay in constant contact with parents and community members. Oddfellows mentioned that it would like to have a newsletter for parents, but it doesn't have the staffing to make this happen. All Children's Theater runs programs all throughout the state of Rhode Island and even programs in Connecticut and Massachusetts. So while they might try to keep in contact with many parents, with 700-800 children in an outreach program, "it's just not possible."

In contrast, NMS and CMW have found a way to communicate well with parents despite their small staffs. This success comes from a key addition in both of the organizations--a parent council. NMS's parent council originated with parents getting together and discussing what kind of program they wanted for their children. An individual parent rose from this parent council as a leader and a helper among the parents. NMS hired her to work part time and she is responsible for recruiting families and staying in contact with them every week. The organization considers having people in the community engaged as the "key to the program." Because her focus is on the families, she not only relieves a lot of the workload (making phone calls every week) for the rest of the staff, but also helps to create a strong relationship between staff members and parents.

CMW uses a similar tactic. It has a parent council consisting of two parents who are also members of the administrative board, two parents who are not members of the board, and one board member who is not a parent. These five members are responsible for calling the parents and recruiting them for events. While the parents are not paid staff, their time commitment plays an important role in reminding parents of events and getting them to attend. Again, having this group to take on the responsibility of parent contact helps the staff as well as aids in building a reliable line of communication between the organization and the parents.

## **Trust**

Finally, the level of trust a parent has in the organization affects how involved he or she will become. For several of these after-school programs, getting the parents to allow their children to participate is the first step in parent involvement. ACT explains that "there is a culture amongst the population that says to be a good mom is to keep the authorities away from your children, and activity like this is giving your kids over to authorities." There is a fear amongst some parents that these programs are associated with the Department of Children, Youth, and Family Services (DCYF) and that their children will be taken away. An Oddfellows teacher suggests that many families feel disenfranchised by the "mainstream system" and may feel that Oddfellows is part of that system. Gaining the trust of the parents and making it clear to them that the programs and the parents are on the same side is essential in increasing participation, communication, and parental involvement.

The use of parents or a parent council as the liaison between parents and the organization aids enormously in the development of trust. These parents come from the community and are

dealing with many of the same issues or share similar experiences with the other parents in the area. In the case of NMS, the parent contact also speaks Spanish, and by being able to effectively communicate with the parents she develops a relationship with them. The effect is similar with CMW. GSAC employs two mothers from the community and has one mother who volunteers. The volunteer has three kids and a grandchild in the program and “the kids all know her... This is someone they know and trust, and who the parents know and trust. That connection to the community helps a lot... They’re going out and spreading the word that this is a worthwhile program.” So not only do these parents provide a link between the organization and parents, but the familiarity with someone from their neighborhood who supports the program for children helps to cultivate a trusting relationship. Once the children are involved in the program, it becomes clear that both the parents and the organization share similar goals and are on the same side.

### **Parent Contracts**

Two organizations, CMW and NMS, have an agreement with parents that they will attend classes or performance events. This requirement in addition to parent councils most likely accounts for the programs’ high percentage of parent involvement. CMW actually has parents sign a contract at the beginning of the program stating that they will attend most of the events. These events include performances as well as family concert trips. Family members as well as the children are expected to attend these trips, where the families are bused to professional concerts as a group. Trips are a significant part of the events calendar for CMW, and by requiring attendance ahead of time, many of the parents attend.

NMS has a similar agreement with the parents of students. While it does not have a written contract, parent attendance is required for a child to join the program. NMS is a PACK (Parents And Communities for Kids) organization, which targets families with children ages six to ten living in low-income neighborhoods. PACK provides an opportunity for families to go places and do activities together. As a PACK organization, NMS does not accept children without parents at their lessons. This rule of “just say no” to parents who want to send only their children is very effective for increasing parent involvement, yet brings up the concern that this rule may exclude children who are the most “at-risk;” a child who has a parent unwilling to be involved with an arts program due to either time or interest is deprived of the benefits of an arts-

based program for at-risk youth. While parent involvement may be high in the PACK programs, they may simply be avoiding the problem by excluding families where parent involvement may be an issue.

## **Community**

The issue of community involvement brings up two specific questions: First, who compromises the community (the neighborhood or the greater community)? And does community involvement mean the community comes to events or the program goes to the community? In this section the relationships between these programs, the neighborhood, and the greater communities will be examined.

### **Neighborhood Coming to the Program**

Location seems to be a major factor in how much the community is involved with a program. When a program is located in the community, the neighborhood involvement is much greater. GSAC, located in the North End of Middletown (the neighborhood they serve), acts as a community center in a variety of ways. The facility is the meeting place of the North End Action Team, a local resident activist organization, and GSAC provides childcare while parents are in their meetings. Not only is the center a meeting place, but several members of the community also participate in classes at the center. CMW teaches most of its classes at community centers in the neighborhoods they serve, so the neighborhood community has easy access to the program as well.

### **Going to the Neighborhoods**

On the other hand, Oddfellows is located outside of the neighborhoods it serves and buses the children to and from this location. The distance from the neighborhood seems to limit neighborhood involvement. An Oddfellows teacher explained that when the 5-7 year olds of the Troupes program prepared a kwanza celebration at Oddfellows, only two parents of the seventeen kids showed up. In response to this lack of attendance' an Oddfellows teacher explains, "[Oddfellows] is making modifications. Like this year we did the kwanza celebration in the neighborhood, so then I could go to the doors and say 'listen, we'll just wait for you, its cool, I'll do it at your door if I have to.'" Oddfellows' other successful programs include Fiesta,

a block party held in Maplewood Terrace in the springtime, and the gift-drive done in both Chatham Court and Maplewood Terrace during the holiday season. By going into the community, Oddfellows has increased both neighborhood and parent involvement.

RAW has also found success in going out into the community. In its program, “Van-Go”, the children of RAW go to the YMCA, churches, baseball games, and a variety of other places to face-paint or do different forms of art. The van the children ride around in is brightly painted and well known throughout the community. The children even painted a mural on one of the streets in the community called “One World.” This involvement in the community gives the kids pride. As one RAW therapist states, “for them to be seen in the community for something positive is huge. They are seen out in the community and they know they are doing something good.” So not only does this community involvement foster a good relationship between the neighborhood and the program, but it also gives the children a sense of recognition and pride in their artwork.

### **Involvement with the Greater Community**

Several programs have had success in involvement with the community outside the local neighborhoods. Both RAW and CMW are recruited by outside businesses or organizations to contribute their art. CMW is constantly contacted by libraries and schools in Providence to perform at events. Businesses from the community contact RAW and ask for t-shirt designs or murals. This recruitment stems from and contributes to a good reputation of the program in the greater community.

Despite the good reputation of most of these programs, getting the greater community to attend events still proves a challenge. An Oddfellows teacher stated that while the Playhouse enjoys funding from the community and benefits from having fundraising events and plays at Oddfellows, “its more important to us to get the community [Middletown] to the neighborhood.” Unfortunately, in spite of numerous complimentary tickets sent out to schools, guidance counselors, teachers, the city council, the Chamber of Commerce, and funding organizations, invitees rarely show up for the events. While the greater community may display an interest in these programs, actually getting the people to the neighborhoods or events has proven a problem.

## **Schools**

The relationship between schools and these after-school programs has been greatly beneficial. A partnership with schools can be useful for recruiting children, transportation, and extending instruction. NMS recruited many of the kids involved in their program through the schools, which sent a letter about the program home with the endorsement of the principal to encourage participation in their program. The school system also provides a bus that transports the kids. GSAC is in contact with the superintendent and the supervisors of the arts programs at the local schools as well. A bus drops students off at GSAC after school, providing the children with a way to get to the program. GSAC tries to keep in touch with teachers at the schools in order to act as an extension of the school's curriculum. CMW also tries to keep in touch with teachers, explaining "we try to have a good relationship with teachers. If a student is learning violin and we're teaching violin, we try to be in contact."

## **Summary**

- While there are several different forms of community involvement, the main focus of most of these programs seems to be on getting more parents involved. It is that involvement that helps to foster trust between the parents of the community and the organization.
- Parent focus groups, councils, and coordinators seem to be the best way to address the barriers to parent involvement.
- Parent and neighborhood involvement are the highest when programs bring events to the neighborhoods themselves.
- In contrast to these successes, getting the greater community to attend program events still poses a problem that needs to be addressed.
- The increase in both parental and community support should be a primary focus because both are crucial to the development of self-esteem and confidence in "at-risk" children, a development that remains the central goal of these arts-based programs.

## **V. Funding**

When asked what problems the agencies have experienced in carrying out their programs, staff members almost always answered “funding.” Every aspect of the program is dependent on funding and a lack of resources often limits the capacity a program has to reach its vision. The programs examined vary in budgets, but they work equally hard to maintain resources for their programs. Because the programs work with kids from low-income neighborhoods, all the programs were either free to the students or demanded only a small fee. Oddfellows, RAW, and the Neighborhood Music School are free of charge for students involved. The GSAC asks for a small payment, largely to give parents a sense of investment in the center. Payment is based on a sliding scale and can be as little as \$15 for twenty weeks, although parents can work off the payment by volunteering at the arts center. A few of the programs didn’t know how much they spend per student per year, but GSAC said it costs about \$3000 per student per year and Community MusicWorks spends about \$2000 dollars on every student per year. Programs have all created some important strategies for raising money.

### **Attaining/ Maintaining Sources**

Basing funding on local organizations or individuals seems to be more dependable than government funding. The director of RAW has found that government funding can vary from year to year depending on the impersonal actions of government agencies. RAW has had entire sources of funding cut because legislatures decided to zero out funding to arts-based community programs in certain years. Since then, RAW has made sure to focus on other sources of funding instead of the government. In reference to government sources, the RAW director stated, “never put all your eggs in that basket.” All the programs similarly avoid depending on government funding, and instead focus on local sources. This opinion of government spending is notable because The President’s Committee on Arts and Humanities states government funding is the most common form of funding (1994: 15).

When asked about fundraising, all the programs recommended having a variety of funding sources. As the director of GSAC put it, “It is very important to diversify your revenue stream, so if funding is cut from one source, we’re not in dire straights.” In addition, most of the programs are funded by local foundations, corporations or individuals. For Community MusicWorks, about 70 percent of the funding comes from foundations and grants while the rest

comes from individual contributions and some earned income from the quartet performances and other benefit concerts. CMW has some small government grants, specifically the National Endowment for the Arts, the state arts council, and the city of Providence. CMW has done a good job of obtaining a variety of funding and has done so by keeping good relationships with its donors. The individual support comes from two direct mail appeals every year and a variety of sit-down meetings with donors. RAW approaches funding one donor at a time. The RAW director discussed the difficulty of funding: “it’s slow--a person by person project, getting people to say ‘this is my charity’.” All Children’s Theater honors its donors by holding an annual Action Awards event where they recognize a large corporation, an individual, a small business and a volunteer who made an “Active” impact on ACT for the year. In this way, ACT shows its gratitude for the donation and keeps a good relationship with its particularly large donors. The strategies listed above help programs to attain a wide range of donors and maintain donors’ resources over time.

### **Development Directors**

Because funding is such a time consuming task it demands the focus of a full-time development director. All Children’s Theater, Oddfellows, the Neighborhood Music School, RAW and Oddfellows all employ a director of development. At Community MusicWorks the director (who is also a teacher) does some of the fundraising with support from other staff members. Being involved in other aspects of the program, he understands how the funding falls in line with program design. The development director of NMS also commented on the versatile role of a development director: “I don’t think you could just hire any grant writer to do it. I have had a lot of experience in education--spent years working to strengthen education in the state.” With a strong background in arts-based education, one can handle a variety of issues that arise when seeking out funding and understand the connections of funding to program design and execution.

### **“Fundraisers”**

Some programs involve kids in fundraising tasks. The students that are on the Community MusicWorks board play a part in obtaining funding, along with the other board members. The most common way that kids are able to participate in funding is through

fundraising events. Each program has unique events that are meant to raise money, yet this is not where the majority of funding comes from. The CMW director explained, “Events are never as successful as just sitting down with a donor and asking for a donation. Asking for a gift is much simpler and faster than planning a big event.” But while these events do not generate large sums of money, they have other purposes: to expand a program’s base of friends and connections and to gain recognition in the community (an extremely important component to funding). The CMW director calls such events “friendraisers,” not “fundraisers.” RAW has a dance party to raise money every year. GSAC is planning a fundraiser in which artwork from children in the program will be displayed in restaurants, and available for purchase. While GSAC will make some money from this event, people from the community will learn more about GSAC and see what the kids are doing at the arts center. Events like this will be important down the road for GSAC to build a reputation in the community.

### **Community Foundations/ Involvement**

Having connections to other programs or community foundations has been important for some programs in getting funding. The Neighborhood Music School has obtained most of its funding through its connections with community foundations. The community foundation for Greater New Haven won NMS the grant from the Wallace Foundation, which funds the entire parent and children art program at NMS and Creative Arts Workshop. Keeping connections like these open may bring further funding down the road.

The subject of gaining community recognition is perhaps the most important aspect of funding. Programs that have put this into practice include Community MusicWorks and RAW. RAW has obtained a great variety of funding because it is well known in the community. As the director of RAW said, funding is about “getting people to say this is my charity.” RAW also tries to get coverage from local news and cable television, and has gotten it numerous times. When RAW is trying to win the support of a large donor, chances of success are greater if the donor has seen RAW’s activity in the community. This correlation between good reputation in the community and greater funding is most likely true for all agencies. *Examples of how programs engage in community activities and perform in public were given in the Parent and Community Involvement section.*

## Summary

- Basing funding on local foundations, organizations, corporations and individuals is much more dependable than government funding.
- It is important to have a variety of funding and to keep good communication with donors - making them feel good about donating by honoring them.
- It is extremely important to become well known through events. Fundraising events are important in building a reputation. By seeing a program's public efforts to fundraise, donors may be more likely to give money.
- Programs become known in the community by performing in public and taking part in community events. *See the Parent and Community Involvement section for examples.*

## Conclusion

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By examining six arts-based after-school programs for “at-risk” youth we have discovered many trends that can be used not only as the basis for comparison between the programs, but also as a step towards improving each program. Below are the practices the research team feels are most successful.

While each of the programs is run uniquely, most share similar ideas regarding key areas of program design and execution. Certain programs have discovered very efficient ways of executing these ideas. Programs meet with the most success when as many people as possible are involved in the program design. This includes program directors, teachers, and the participating youth. In the classroom, an environment of mutual respect leads everyone to perform well. Issues that “at-risk” youth face need to be addressed, while integration amongst different neighborhoods potentially enhances everyone's learning experiences. Integration of other types such as between youth of varying ages has proven to work well.

Based on our observations of staffing, an effective practice is to hire staff with a high level of artistic skill. Community MusicWorks uses professional musicians to teach students of all ages. Considering the high retention rate and large waiting list, students seem to respond well to such high standards. In order to generate high levels of artistic training and a deep engagement in arts appreciation in their students, teachers must exhibit the same qualities. When students see that their teacher has a high level of training, they are likely to set high standards for themselves, inspired by the teacher's work. It is also important to provide staff members who

can act as relatable role models, whether through similar backgrounds or identifying characteristics.

Successful programs involve parents in decision-making roles. Hiring parents as board members, coordinators, liaisons, or general staff members allows for the highest level of communication with parents and the community. Parents acquire a sense of ownership when involved in the organization's inner workings.

Program assessment is most productive when undertaken through various forms and completed by various people. While surveys, written evaluations and formal meetings provide necessary resources for feedback and funding, it is often the informal methods of assessment that become most beneficial to the programs. Because it is time consuming and overwhelming to compile data from excessive written evaluations, the best method is often through informal discussion with internal and external participants of the programs.

As important as completing program assessment is what a program chooses to *do* with that assessment. Assessment seems pointless if it does not lead to beneficial program reform. By making changes through the suggestions provided in the assessments, programs ensure that parents, kids, and staff will take future assessments seriously and also develop a sense of ownership in the program.

In these after-school arts-based programs that focus almost all of their efforts towards children, evaluating the program is almost entirely based on evaluating the progress of the students. In order to evaluate student progress, programs have had to find a method of evaluating success. Amongst the programs studied, the definitions of success varied along a spectrum with one end measuring success through proficiency in an art form and the other end measuring success through progress made in *any* aspect the individual student's life. While all of the programs sought to improve the "whole child," it was obvious that certain programs fell on different points of the success spectrum. After analyzing all of the programs, we have found it most beneficial to measure success through a combination of these outcomes--artistic proficiency and professionalism (which helps encourage pride, future goals, and community recognition) as well as visible success/improvements in personal growth (which helps promote skills that can be related to numerous aspects of life).

Additionally, it is important for a program to analyze and continuously discuss the rationale behind their chosen methods of program assessment and chosen measurements of

success. In this way, organizations can reflect on both the positive and negative effects of measuring certain students by different standards, and when needed, revise these methods accordingly.

As implied above, parent involvement is incredibly beneficial in developing a successful relationship between the organization and the community. Parent focus groups, councils, and coordinators have proven to be the best way to increase parent involvement. Parent and neighborhood involvement are the highest when programs are located in or bring events to the neighborhoods themselves. While there have been many effective strategies addressing a lack of neighborhood and parent involvement, getting the greater community to attend program events still poses a problem for these organizations. Parental and community support are crucial to the development of self-esteem and confidence in these at-risk children. Because this development is a central goal of these arts-based programs, the increase of parent and community involvement should be a primary focus of each organization.

It is important to maintain a variety of funding sources, with resources spread out among individual donors, foundations, corporations, and the government. A staff member should be dedicated to development and attaining funding. A development director must be well versed in arts-based education, and have a clear understanding of the program mission and design.

There also seems to be a direct correlation between involvement/reputation in the community and number of donors. After-school programs are better able to convince donors to say “this is my charity” if they are well known in the community. Building a reputation comes with being active in the community-- holding open fundraising events, displaying art, or performing publicly. Being active in the community fosters community bonding, and promotes art to all. In addition, youth are able to gain recognition for their work and foster positive and creative identities among their own communities. Funding should not be the only incentive in building a dynamic presence in the community, but doing so will make grant writing and applying to donors more effective.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

- A more extensive study that incorporates the opinion of youth. Because these programs are attempting to serve a population of “at-risk” youth, the opinions of this population should be examined.

- Parents should also be included in the discussion of effective strategies for improving programs. This could be especially helpful for parent and community involvement.
- Perform the same study on a broader scale. This could include interviewing more teachers, staff members, and organizations.
- Most importantly, the organizations examined in this report should communicate with one another as well as with other similar organizations. Contact information for each organization can be found in Appendix E.

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### Appendix A

#### Interview Information Sheet

You have been asked to participate in a research project initiated by Oddfellows Playhouse (Middletown, CT) seeking to compare after-school arts programs. We are focusing our research on program design, execution, assessment, and funding as well as parent/community involvement. Our goal is to analyze the successful and unsuccessful approaches in dealing with problems in these areas in order to generate common field knowledge of after-school arts programs.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may later decide to stop- at any time for any reason.

You may receive a copy of any consent form that you sign by calling Professor Rob Rosenthal in the Sociology Department at Wesleyan University, (860)685-2943 or email: rrosenthal@wesleyan.edu.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Professor Rob Rosenthal at (860)685-2943, rrosenthal@wesleyan.edu.

Thank you for your help and your time! Your organization will be given a copy of the final report once it has been completed. If you have any questions about this research project feel free to call or email any of our research team members:

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(860)593-1179  
schristensen@wesleyan.edu

Vanessa Jones  
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## **Appendix B**

### **Consent to Participate in a Study on Arts Based After School Programs**

This form asks for your consent to participate in a study, backed by Oddfellows Playhouse, of arts-based after-school programs in the northeast. We will study multiple arts-based after-school programs in the northeast and develop a report highlighting effective means of designing and executing such community based programs. To learn more about the study, read the information form attached.

If you choose to participate in the project, you will take part in an interview lasting between an hour and an hour and a half. You will be asked about the after school program you are involved in, and about the organization that administers it. The questions cover subjects including program design and execution, parent and community involvement, methods of program assessment, funding and administration and staffing. To ensure proper data collection, all interviews will be recorded unless you choose not to.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may choose to end the interview and withdraw consent at any point. You may refuse to answer any question at any time. The interviewer will move on to the next question.

If you wish, you may remain anonymous. We will change your name in the final report and no one will learn of your identity. All data collected, including the transcript of this interview will either be kept with the researchers or in a secure box at the sociology department at Wesleyan University.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact any of the researchers. Our phone numbers and email addresses are listed on the information form. If you wish to become more involved with this research project, contact us at any time. Your organization will be given a copy of the final report once it is completed.

**Please check the boxes below:**

-- You may use my real name in your report: \_\_\_\_\_.

-- I wish to remain anonymous: \_\_\_\_\_.

--I request this as my anonymous name: \_\_\_\_\_.

“I, the undersigned, have read the consent form and understand my role in this research project.  
I agree to participate in this study of arts based after school programs.”

\_\_\_\_\_.

Participant Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_.

Participant Signature

Date

# Appendix C

## Original Interview

### Interview Questions

#### Program Design and Execution

1. Could you please give a general description of your program, including how long the program has existed?
2. Who is involved in program design and alterations?
3. Are kids involved in running any aspects of the program, including directing and producing performances, rule making, administrative work, etc.?
4. Are kids ever asked to reflect on their experiences with the program?
5. What are the main goals of your program (your mission statement)? Is your program designed to address the most pressing issues of the children in the community? If so, what are those issues? Do you feel you have successfully addressed these issues? If so, how? Have you altered your original goals for the program since its conception?
6. Who is eligible for your program? How do you define the community you are trying to serve? How are these children recruited for your program? Have you encountered any problems in the recruitment process?
7. Do you feel like there are any 'barriers to entry' for this program? What keeps kids from becoming involved in your program?
8. What issues/challenges have you had to face in executing the programs? How do you plan to resolve these problems? Was there a time in the past when there was a challenge you successfully resolved? If so, please explain.
9. How do you deal with transportation/safety issues?
10. How do you deal with issues of discipline?

## Parent and Community Involvement

1. Do you feel having the parents and community involved is important to the success of your program?
2. What percentage (general idea) of the parents is active in your program? In what ways are they active?
3. In what ways do you attempt to get the parents involved?
4. How often do you invite parents to participate in their children's activities?
5. How do you advertise to parents/community? Through fliers? Newspapers? Phone calls?
6. What are relations like between the parents and the program? What do you consider good communication with parents? Have you achieved this? What have been the main problems with communication?
7. Do you find some parents aren't involved? Why do you think that is? How do you attempt to deal with these parents?
8. Would you say your program is well known in the community you are trying to serve? How do you think you have become well known, and if not, how do you plan to address this? How do you think the community feels about your program?
9. Do you work with or have partnerships with other institutions, such as schools?
10. Do the children have opportunities to go out into the community while working with the program? Do they perform in public or other places besides the center?
11. Do the children have an opportunity to give back to the community in some way? If so, in what ways?

## Methods of Program Assessment

1. What are your current methods of assessment for your programs?
2. Who assesses the program and how do they do it?
3. How often do you do some kind of assessment and how do you implement change?
4. What are your methods for dealing with complaints?
5. What is success to you for the program?
6. What is success to you for the kids of the community?

7. How do you measure that success?
8. What is the retention rate for this/these program/s?
9. Which specific program is your most successful in terms of retention rate and feedback?
10. What does your program/s do well?
11. What are the biggest problems you have come across in executing the goals of your program? How do you plan to address those problems?
12. How does your program affect the youth who participate?
13. Do you do any follow-up with your past students? Is there feedback from the community in regards to program design?

#### Funding Questions:

1. How much, on average, do you spend on every student? What do you think about this?
2. How much should be spent on every student and why?
3. Are the kids involved in the raising of money?
4. How do you fund the program? Where does the funding come from
5. How much do you need financially to keep the program running successfully?
6. Have you found funding to be difficult? Easy? A non-issue?
7. How do you advertise for possible funding?
8. Do you think funding issues have ever hindered your program? If so, how have you gotten around this obstacle?
9. What specific fundraising events have been most successful?

#### Administration/Staffing

1. What do you look for when hiring your staff? Criteria for staff of program?
2. How many staff members do you have?
3. What is the background of your staff? Are they from the community? Do you recruit primarily from the community?
4. Do parents/kids have a chance to assess the staff?
5. What are ideal characteristics of a staff member of your program?

# Appendix D

## Final Interview

### ODDF Interview Questions:

#### Program Design and Execution:

- ✓ Could you please give a general description of your program?
  - How long has it been around?
  - Who is involved in program design and alterations?
    - Are kids involved?
  - Main Goals/Mission Statement?
    - Any alterations since conception?
  - Issues of children in the community?
    - Does program address these issues successfully?
    - How?
    - Who is eligible?
    - How is the community defined?
    - How are they recruited?
    - Any “barriers to entry”?
  - What challenges have you faced in executing the program?
    - Resolutions to the challenges?
    - Specific examples of challenges that were resolved successfully?
    - Transportation/Safety issues?
    - Discipline issues?
  - How do you get them interested in the arts?
  - Do kids have chance to reflect on experiences?

### **Parent and Community Involvement:**

Do you feel the parents and community are involved in your program?

- How many/what percentage of parents involved?
- How active?
- How do you get them involved?
- How often?
- Advertising?
- Relations? Communication?
- Deal with those that aren't involved?
- Program well-known in community?
  - How?
- Partnerships with schools?
- Perform in other public places?
- Feedback from community?
- Involvement important to success of program?

### **Methods of assessment:**

What are your current methods of assessment for your programs?

- Assessment of program itself and progress of children
- Who assesses the programs?
- How often are assessments done?
- How is change implemented?
- What do you consider success and how is it measured?
- What is the retention rate for this/these programs?
- What factors play into the retention rate?
- How can the retention rate be improved?
- Do you do any follow-up with your past students? How?
- If no follow-up, why not?

**Funding:**

- How do you fund the program? Where does the funding come from?
- How much do you need financially to keep the program running successfully?
- How much, on average, do you spend on every student? What do you think about this?
- Who is involved in the raising of money? Are the kids involved in the raising of money?
- Have you found funding to be difficult? Easy? A non-issue?
- How do you seek possible funding?
- Do you think funding issues have ever hindered your program? If so, how have you gotten around this obstacle?
- What specific fundraising events have been most successful?

**Administration/Staffing**

- What do you look for when hiring your staff? Criteria for staff of program?
- How many staff members do you have?
- What is the background of your staff? Are they from the community? Do you recruit primarily from the community?
- Do parents/kids have a chance to assess the staff?

## Appendix E

### Contact Information for Organizations in Study

#### **Oddfellows Playhouse:**

128 Washington Street  
Middletown, CT 06457  
Tel: (860) 347-6143  
Email: [oddfellows@wesleyan.edu](mailto:oddfellows@wesleyan.edu)  
Program Manager: Dominick Grant  
Website: [www.oddfellows.org](http://www.oddfellows.org)

#### **Community MusicWorks**

1392 Westminister Street  
Providence, RI 02909  
Tel: (401) 861-5650  
Email: [info@communitymusicworks.org](mailto:info@communitymusicworks.org)  
Director: Sebastian Ruth

#### **Raw Art Works**

37 Central Square  
Lynn, MA 01901  
Tel: (781) 593-5515  
Email: [mail@rawart.org](mailto:mail@rawart.org)  
Executive Director: Kit Jenkins  
Website: [www.rawart.org](http://www.rawart.org)

#### **All Children's Theatre**

255 Main St. Suite 201  
Pawtucket, RI 02860  
Tel: (401) 728- 1222  
Email: [ACTinRI@aol.com](mailto:ACTinRI@aol.com)  
Director: Wrenn Goodrum  
Website: [www.actinri.org](http://www.actinri.org)

#### **Neighborhood Music School**

1000 Audubon St.  
New Haven, CT 06510  
Tel: (203) 624-5189  
Email: [info@nmsmusicschool.org](mailto:info@nmsmusicschool.org)  
Director of advancement:  
Jane Christie  
Website: [nmsmusicschool.org](http://nmsmusicschool.org)

#### **Green Street Arts Center**

51 Green Street  
Middletown, CT 06457  
Tel: (860) 685- 7871  
Director: Ricardo Morris  
Website:  
[www.greenstreetartscenter.org](http://www.greenstreetartscenter.org)