



DETROIT EXCELLENCE IN YOUTH ARTS

Detroit Excellence in Youth Arts

Youth Based Arts Programs Focus Groups

Key Findings

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JFM CONSULTING GROUP

Social Change through Strategy, Planning, Research & Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

The mission of Detroit Youth Excellence in Arts (DYEA) is to support the creative development of Detroit youth through racial equity, collective impact and sustainability within and through the arts. DYEA seeks to harness collective action to help build the capacity of Detroit's youth arts ecosystem. With this in mind, in an effort to gain a better understanding of youth arts programming opportunities, gaps, and barriers in Detroit, DYEA engaged JFM Consulting Group (JFM), a Detroit-based planning and evaluation firm to design and facilitate six focus groups. This document summarizes the key findings of these focus groups.

EVALUATION GOALS

-  Better understand the arts programming landscape in Detroit.
-  Identify gaps/needs in youth arts programming.
-  Acquire recommendations from artists, art/music teachers, parents, and youth to improve arts programming in Detroit.

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Below, **Table 1.** displays the six focus group populations and number of participants present at each focus group. In total there were **47 (n = 47)** participants across the 6 focus groups.

Population	Description	n = 47
Youth	<i>Youth aged 11-19 enrolled in either an in-school or out-of-school arts program</i>	3
		11
Parents	<i>Parents of youth aged 11-19 enrolled in either an in-school or out-of-school arts program</i>	1
		8
Art Teachers	<i>Teachers who teach in-school art programs in Detroit schools</i>	11
Music Teachers	<i>Teachers who teach in-school music programs in Detroit schools</i>	4
Teaching Artists	<i>Artists who teach youth at out-of-school programs or contractually work with schools, but are not in-school arts teachers</i>	10

Table 1. Focus Group Participants

KEY FINDINGS

The qualitative data gathered in the focus group were analyzed by JFM. Qualitative analysis included open and axial coding to identify emerging themes and patterns, and pattern-matching analysis to identify explanatory correlations.

YOUTH FINDINGS

Youth participants (**n=14**), aged 12 to 19 years old, indicated involvement in a variety different arts program, and often participate in more than one program. A list of some of the types of programs, as well as some specific programs, youth are involved in are listed below:

- Printmaking
- Design
- Igbo dance
- Crescendo Detroit
- UofM Pathways
- Kid Explore Japan
- Inside out literary art poetry
- Downtown Boxing Gym
- Motown Bonus Tracks program
- Motown Lyric program
- Motown Ignite
- Detroit Zoological society
- All city dance team
- Cass tech dance core curriculum
- Detroit Windsor Dance Academy
- House of Jit
- Film
- 3D Art
- Fashion Design
- Film study
- 2D Art
- Orchestra
- Théâtre Production
- Detroit Suzuki Academy
- Dearborn Youth Symphony Chamber Orchestra
- Photography
- Symphonic band
- Concert Band

Similarly, youth attended a variety of schools across the city of Detroit:

- College for Creative Studies
- The school at Marygrove
- Detroit Achievement Academy
- Jalen Rose Leadership Academy
- Cass Technical High School
- Renaissance High School
- PACE Academy
- Henry Ford High School
- University prep art and design

Of the 14 youth present across the two youth focus groups, **64% (n=9)** participated in arts programming both in and outside of school, and the remaining **36% (n=5)** only participated in arts programming outside of school. All youth participants indicated practicing their art at least 3-4 times a week, and many indicated practicing daily.

Why the arts: When asked why they participate in arts, many youths explained that their passion drives them, participating in their arts programs makes them happy and is a good way they can meet new people and make more friends. Others indicated that they want to pursue arts as their career and continue to explore and build upon their talents. One participant emphasized her love for arts, stating; *"It's something I've loved doing since I was very young, I've loved singing- It's become a part of me I guess."*

Support: Largely, youth felt supported by their parents, teachers, friends, and other adults in their lives to continue pursuing their journey as artists. One participant mentioned, *“Those around me motivate me to continue my work ethic,”* and many participants mentioned that their teachers, parents, and neighbors often go out of their way to attend their performances. During the focus groups, there were only a few recommendations as to how adults can be more supportive to the young artists. Youth participants recommended that parents, teachers, and other adults could be more supportive by:

- Continuing encouragement
- Allow more independent work
- Help with networking and getting art out there
- Provide additional individual attention/instruction

Challenges: When asked what challenges youth and their friends face while participating in arts programs, there were a couple common challenges. The biggest challenge youth discussed was having the time to participate or practice their art. Often their time was divided between, taking care of siblings, other school programs, homework, and/or a job.

Additionally, the cost of arts programs was a barrier for youth. Particularly youth that were involved in music programs indicated costs as a barrier. One youth noted that he has been saving money for a while to afford a new instrument. Lastly, transportation was a barrier that youth mentioned, especially for youth who participate in programming outside of school, getting there on time or having a ride at all was a challenge.

Getting other youth involved: A few suggestions were made by youth participants to encourage more youth participation in the arts. These suggestions are as follows:

- Modernizing arts programs to appeal to more youth
- Providing supplies and resources
- Advertise on social media
- Additional support/programs at school
- Make information about the programs more readily available

Youth Recommendations: Largely, youth were satisfied with the programs available to them in Detroit. However, there were a few suggestions that could improve Detroit arts programs which include city or school district wide artwork showcases to students can network and display their art, and lowering the costs of some program. Additionally, youth would like to see a larger variety of arts programs offered, especially at school. Lastly, as youth mentioned above, time was a big challenge, thus students would like to have increased time to practice their arts during school hours, either in their arts classes or having a free “creativity” hour.

PARENT FINDINGS

In total, there were 9 parent participants present across the two focus groups. Parents across the city of Detroit indicated that their children were involved in a variety of programs, including:

- Inside out
- Motown Summer Camp

- Motown Ignites
- Lyric Project
- Youth Symphony Chamber Orchestra
- School music class
- Community center arts program
- Drum class
- Downtown Boxing Gym
- School band
- Detroit Suzuki Academy

Many parents learned about their child's arts program through other parents, school, church, and community center flyers. Typically, their children either attend or practice their art during school or hours or in weekday evenings, and parents indicated that many performances are often on Saturday mornings.

Appreciation: When asked what they appreciate most about their children's' arts programs, largely parents appreciated the social skills and confidence that the program helps their child build. Parents indicated that some of their children have made new friendships and are happy to see their children finding enjoyment in something. One parent mentioned *"[the program] keeps my child busy and engaged with what he genuinely likes doing."* Another aspect that parents appreciated was free/reduced price programs, many indicated that if the programs weren't free or were most costly, that they are unsure if their child could continue to participate.

All parent participants indicated that they never receive negative feedback from their children about their arts programs. Generally, their children really love their programming and get a lot of enjoyment out of it.

While there is often a negative stigmatization of arts, none of the parents knew of other parents who actively discouraged their youth from participating in an arts program. Rather, many acknowledged that both themselves and other parents they know understand and appreciate the skills that their children can learn from participation in the arts.

Transportation: Generally, the commute for parents to drop their children off at their arts programs varied. Some parents indicated their child's program was within walking distance from their home, while others indicated that the program was on the opposite side of the City, which means a 30-45 minute drive, not including traffic.

Despite some of the longer commutes, none of the parents in the focus groups had transportation issues outside of the occasional, normal, car troubles. However, parents acknowledged knowing that transportation is often a challenge for other parents. To combat this, some of the parents stated that they often pick up or drop off other children. Similarly, a parent indicated that the director of her child's program often drops kids off back home as well.

Challenges: The cost of programming was the most frequently mentioned challenge that parents face involving their children's art programs. Similar to the youth focus group, instruments both renting and buying were mentioned as significant barriers. Furthermore, another challenge parents noted in youth participation in arts programs is if they are shy or anxious. One parent stated that it's important that kids feel they fit into these programs, and if they are prone to

teasing, that this could prevent them from exploring the arts. Lastly, parents/youth schedules were mentioned as a challenge, although no parents indicated that they have had to decline their child's participation due to their own schedules.

Parent Recommendations: Overall, parents were satisfied with the programs their children are enrolled in. However, there were some suggestions to increase access and improve arts programs across the city of Detroit. These recommendations are as follows:

- Increased funding
- Provide transportation from school to after-school programs via shuttles or free bus passes
- Provide more in-school programs
- Outcome/artwork showcases
- Funding/rental program for instruments

ART AND MUSIC SCHOOL TEACHER FINDINGS

For the purposes of these key findings, art and music teacher responses were analyzed together, as their focus group questions were largely the same.

Arts and music teachers that participated in the focus groups had variable levels of teaching experience years, ranging from 2 to 46 years of teaching. Of the 15 in-school teachers that participated across the 2 focus groups, **66% (n=10)** currently teach in public schools and the remaining **33% (n=5)** teach at charter schools. Below, **Table 2** shows which age groups of student's teachers provide arts instruction to. Note, teachers often teach multiple age groups.

School type	Pre-k (n=1)	K-5 (n=12)	6-8 (n=11)	Highschool (n=4)
Charter School Teachers	1	4	3	3
Public School Teachers	0	8	9	1

Table 2. Student age groups taught

In addition to teaching at public and charter schools, many teachers listed other professional associations, including:

- Detroit Art Teacher's Association (DATA)
- Mint Artist
- Michigan Art Education Association (MAEA)
- Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA)
- Mosaic Youth Theatre
- Motown (Hitsville Next)
- Jazz Educators Network
- College for Creative Studies (CCS)
- Music Hall Jazz Education

Before they began teaching in schools, many art and music teachers started their careers as teaching artists, professional artists, studied the arts in school and college, and were volunteers.

Of the 15 teachers, **66% (n=10)** teach full time, and the remaining **5** teach part time, at least 12 hours a week.

Class size and length: Across the teachers, there was a lot of variability in class size, the smallest class mentioned contained 12 students, and the largest was 44. On average, class sized typically fell within the 20-30 student per class range. While teachers didn't typically mind having a larger class, many felt that with these larger classes students were more likely to be disengaged. Similarly, some teachers expressed that while registration for classes is large, there is often attendance issues in their classes. For these reasons, some teachers preferred smaller class sizes (close to 15-20 range) so they can maintain engagement of the class and provide ample group and individual instruction time.

Regarding class length, almost all the public-school teachers indicated that the 50 to 55 minutes of instruction is not enough, especially for older students. After instruction, the students usually only have 20 to 30 minutes of actual practice/creation time. Contrastingly, for younger students this 50 to 55 minute time frame is too long as teachers mentioned the younger children tend to get distracted more easily. However, charter schoolteachers seemed to have longer instruction time (close to 90 minutes), and therefore were more satisfied with the length of their classes.

Challenges: Teachers listed several challenges they face with arts instruction during schools. These challenges are:

- Low class attendance
- Student behavioral issues/homelessness
- Art isn't seen as a "real class"
- Competing scheduling of students
- Transportation for after-school hour instruction
- Combined grade classes as students need various levels of instruction/tasks
- Lack of options/have to stick to curriculum
- Cost of materials

Many teachers discussed having taken these challenges to the school board or principal before, but their suggestions more often didn't come to fruition.

Resources/Grants: While many teachers did feel supported by their schools, some indicated they would love more resource, whether those were provided by the school or external funders. One teacher mentioned, *"I feel supported by school but usually if I need something right then, I have to buy it. Process takes more time than I have sometimes."* Despite the need for additional financial resources, only **26% (n=4)** of teachers have applied to grants, many indicated that they would like to in the future.

Many schools provide art and music teachers with opportunities for professional development 3-4 times a year. Participants also mentioned attending and presenting at conferences and mentioned virtual/online training programs.

Teacher Recommendations: Teachers provided their arts and music educators perspective on what could be done to improve arts education in Detroit. They recommended:

- Inviting teaching artists to come in more frequently to classrooms
- Additional instruction time
- Advocating that the arts is equally important to students education as sports or STEM
- Further support from principals/school board
- Bussing for afterschool programs
- Clearer budgets
- Sense of community among arts teachers via Facebook groups or networking events
- More freedom in curriculum
- Allow students to self-select electives

TEACHING ARTIST FINDINGS

Teaching artists (TA's) that participated in the focus groups had a wide range of years of experience, ranging from 6 to 24 years of teaching. The teaching artists taught a variety of disciplines including:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| • Traditional theatre | • Dance |
| • Applied theatre | • Fashion |
| • Music business | • Sculptures |
| • Songwriting | • Murals |
| • Music production | • Visual arts |
| • Drums | • Painting |

Of the 10 teaching artists, **80% (n=8)** work both independent and contractually, while the remaining **20%** work independently. Those who indicated working on a contractual bases indicated that they have partnered with DPSCD and charter schools in Detroit in the past. Typically teaching artists work part time, roughly 10-20 hours a week, either during school hours or after school. The list of previously or currently partnered schools is as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Schulze | • Northwestern High School |
| • Gompers | • University Prep |
| • Marygrove | • The Boggs School |
| • Chandler Park Academy | • College for Creative Studies |
| • Mumford | • Charlotte Mason Community Schools |
| • Southeastern High School | |
| • Spain Elementary School | |

Similarly, many of the teaching artists have partnered with other local organizations to teach their art specialty across Southeast Michigan. Some of the Detroit-based organizations mentioned are listed below:

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| • Inside Out | • Live coal |
|--------------|-------------|

- Bright Futures
- Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit
- Heartbeat Detroit
- Literary Arts
- Motown Museum
- Mosaic
- Cotillion Society of Detroit
- Delta Gems
- Rosedale Park Players
- LSO Dance
- RAMP-UP Initiative
- Detroit Institute of Music Education
- Detroit School of Arts
- Detroit Institute of Arts
- Axis Music Academy
- Ardis Music
- Guitar Center
- Detroit Children's Choir
- Michigan Opera Theatre
- Shakespeare in Detroit
- Detroit Boys Theatre
- Matrix Theatre
- CASOE Youth Theatre
- Hannan Center

Below, **Table 3.** shows which age groups of student's teachers provide arts instruction to. Note, teaching artists often teach multiple age groups.

Pre-k	K-5	6-8	Highschool
<i>n = 4</i>	<i>n = 9</i>	<i>n = 9</i>	<i>n = 10</i>

Table 3. Teaching artists grades taught

Many of the teaching artists had several certifications, most off which include advanced degrees in the arts, classroom management and teaching artistry.

Outreach: Most of the teaching artists rely on schools to do recruitment for their programs. Those who do not often use other tools such as social media posts (i.e., Facebook), flyers at performances, word-of-mouth, and door-to-door recruitment.

Benefits of being a TA: The most mentioned benefit of being a TA over a traditional in-school art teacher was flexibility. One TA mentioned that the best part of being a teaching artists was; *"100% Flexibility, (specific to what I'm teaching), fun, less meetings to just be able to come in and teach art and leave, less admin stuff"*. The other commonly mentioned benefit was providing arts to youth in another form or way, which many participants mentioned often brings new energy into classrooms and provides excitement for the youth they are teaching.

Professional Development: While most of the TA's were satisfied with their current teaching work, many emphasized the need for further professional development, such as attending more conferences and teacher trainings. Largely, many teaching artists are seeking additional partnerships and collaborations and would like to see better networking opportunities. Some suggestions on how this networking can be done were 1) a Detroit Teaching Artists Facebook

group, 2) networking events and workshops, 3) the curation of a more thorough teaching artists ecosystem, and 4) the creation of handbook or guide to new teaching artists in the area.

Challenges: Participating teaching artists listed a number of challenges they face as TAs in Detroit. The main challenge TA's explained were low child attendance, transportation, and lack of support from schools. Some of the other mentioned challenges are listed below:

- Lack of health insurance/ benefits
- Meeting pre-set classroom expectations
- Competing with other after school activities
- Funding
- Social distractions
- Lack of child confidence
- Learning barriers
- Lack of adequate space/rooms or necessary equipment
- Lack of parental support
- Child hunger

TA's have adopted some strategies to reduce the burden of these challenges, which include 1) communicating needs and expectations, 2) taken trainings on classroom management and student engagement, 3) bringing in healthy snacks, and 4) meeting with parents to emphasize the benefits of their child participating in arts programming. Additionally, to combat some of the funding issues, some participants mentioned applying to grants such as MACC, NAEA, MAEA, and the Knight Foundation, while others expressed their future intent to apply to external funding.

Teaching Artist Recommendations: In addition to their own strategies, teaching artists would like to see some additional support to combat the previously mentioned challenges from other organizations and schools, which include:

- Providing transportation
- Combine contemporary art forms with classically accepted forms
- More communication as to what's available for the youth
- Requiring arts programming in schools
- Funding for supplies for the children
- Less competition, more cooperation
- Jamborees or arts showcases

SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Largely, some of the same challenges were mentioned across the various focus group populations, indicating the significance of these challenges. These major challenges should be a top priority to address and can be done via some of the recommendations provided by focus group participants. **Table 4.** below outlines these major challenges and proposed recommendations.

Major Challenges	Recommendations
Transportation	Transportation to arts programs was noted as a challenge to varying degree by participants in each of the six focus groups. Therefore, any strategy to increase access to arts programming for children in Detroit will need to address transportation. Specifically, DEYA may want to consider the feasibility of implementing transportation recommendations such as: • Providing bussing/shuttles to arts programs • Providing bussing/shuttles from after school programs to home • Securing grants for bus passes
Funding	Funding for arts programs was noted as a challenge to varying degree by participants in each of the six focus groups. Specifically, DEYA may want explore organizing instrument/equipment rental programs and/or acquire funding from: • Foundations • School Grants • Other funding sources
Lack of marketing/ Showcases	Participants in all six focus groups mentioned that to increase access to the arts, advertising needs to be done to inform Detroit youth of the programs that exist. DEYA may want to consider encourage arts programs to increase flyering and school advertising. Additionally, DEYA could host community-wide events to increase arts programming visibility such as: • District wide arts competitions • Arts showcases • Galleries • Meet & greets after performances
Attendance	The last major challenge noted primarily by teacher and teaching artists was attendance. Largely, to increase attendance and participation in the arts, DEYA could provide recommendations to Detroit schools, emphasizing the importance of the arts, and suggest that schools: • Allow students to choose art classes • Encourage equal participation • Provide more diverse arts classes youth would be interested in • Require arts in school curriculum to reduce after-school activity conflicts

Table 4. Major challenges and recommendations