

Making Arts Programming Accessible

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Abstract:

Central Florida Community Arts (CFCArts) and their Florida Arts & Health Collective focus on the Social Determinants of Health to provide equitable access to the arts for all people. CFCArts reaches thousands of unique individuals across the U.S. through partner-based programs and workshops for all populations including those who are aging, under-resourced, and/or medically vulnerable.

This paper serves as a resource providing models for partnership, collaboration, and art programs that can be utilized to create arts-based community programming for any population.

Key Themes: Community Arts Programming, Partnerships, Creating Community Collectives, and Developing / Modifying Arts Programs for Accessibility

I. Introduction

Making Arts Programming Accessible is presented by educator, Kaileigh Anne Tayek. Kaileigh Anne is the Director of Central Florida Community Arts School of Arts and Health. She has a degree in Music Education and years of experience in teaching, directing, and curriculum development. She is an award-winning program developer in writing curricula for students with varying abilities and a passionate speaker on Arts Accessibility.

Central Florida Community Arts is Central Florida's largest arts non-profit. It is home to a 300 member community choir, 180 member symphony orchestra, a robust Children & Youth Arts Program (seeing over 2,000 children a year), a black box theater program, and a School of Arts and Health that serves over 12,000 community members of all ages and abilities in four counties.

II. Defining the Purpose of Community Arts Programming

Creating arts programming means understanding the unique needs of each population. No one person can be an expert in understanding the specifics of every group, and that is why partnerships are key. In analyzing the Central Florida community, CFCArts recognized that there were many under-represented groups who could benefit from artistic experiences.

The CFCArts' mission of serving the community through the arts began as a desire to provide people with safe and inclusive opportunities to perform. The community choir and orchestra, where no audition was required, was the first step. Upon the success of those programs, CFCArts branched into providing children's programming and community arts outreach initiatives. Outreach first began as youth-based arts workshops and classes for low socioeconomic schools and community centers, but quickly expanded into a focus on older adult populations. First, developing programming for healthy aging adults, then developing specific programs for those with dementia and Alzheimer's Disease.

As CFCArts followed needs as directed by community members, city officials, and service providers, they saw an opportunity to serve the whole community. Recognizing the important support needed for medically vulnerable communities, CFCArts partnered with AdventHealth to bring a full-time Music Therapist on staff to personally teach or oversee programs where neurologic goals were addressed or activated through the use of arts activities. By 2020 CFCArts provided over 80 programs that supported general community well-being for both neurotypical populations and other marginalized groups such as those with:

- Alzheimer's Disease
- Autism
- ADHD
- Dementia
- Down Syndrome
- Cerebral Palsy
- Emotional & Behavioral Disorders
- Parkinson's Disease

- PTSD
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairments or low vision

This depth of programming was possible through the use of multiple arts disciplines including Music, Drama, Dance, Creative Writing, and Art. While each discipline can stand alone, cross-disciplinary activities are frequently used to encourage better participation. Historically using activities that engage both hemispheres of the brain provides more opportunities for students to participate and feel successful.

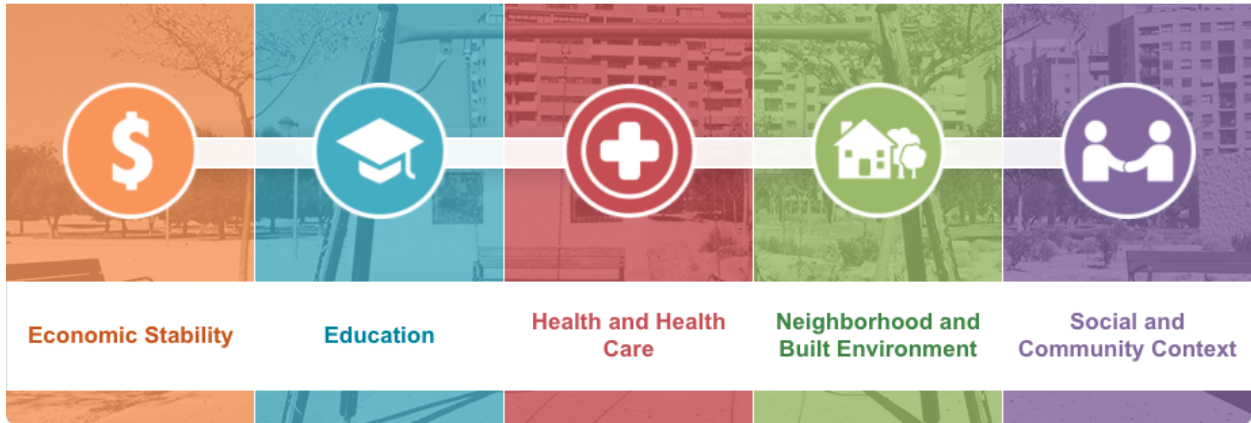
III. **Creating Effective Partnerships**

Partnerships are key to creating any community-based programming. It is through collaboration that we can holistically support the unique needs of different populations. The *CFCArts Arts & Health Collective* believes the arts are essential to life. *The Collective* is a group of service providers, art organizations, healthcare, and higher education institutions that convene to plan, implement, and evaluate multi-disciplinary arts programs designed to bring equity and arts accessibility to our regional communities.

We focus on the **Social Determinants of Health** to provide equitable access to the arts for all people. The Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), as defined by the World Health Organization, are the conditions in people's environments that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. There are five main determinants:

1. **Economic Stability** - This focuses on employment status, income, debt, poverty, housing and/or food insecurities.
2. **Education** - This addresses access to early childhood education, literacy and language resources, vocational training, and higher education.
3. **Health & Health Care** - This addresses access to health coverage, respectful healthcare options, pharmacy accessibility, and overall affordability.
4. **Neighborhood & Built Environment** - This addresses transportation needs and recognizes challenges of specific populations related to one's geographic location in addition to the needs of a community for outdoor recreation.

5. **Social & Community Context** - This relates to the creation of social groups and support systems that provide community engagement and purpose. Additionally, this addresses social inequities such as discrimination in addition to the needs of marginalized populations like those who are incarcerated.



Graphic of the Social Determinants from the website: [HealthyPeople.gov](https://www.healthypeople.gov)

Examples of CFCArts programs created to address a specific Social Determinant:

Bach & Babies: This is a music program for infants and toddlers in daycare facilities in low-income neighborhoods. The program was created in partnership with the Early Learning Coalition of Orange County in order to address the Social Determinant of Education.

Arts & Literacy Summer Program: This creative writing and arts program serves 6th-8th grade students in under-resourced communities with limited access to summer educational opportunities. The program was created in partnership with the Central Florida Urban League in order to address the Social Determinant of Neighborhood & Built Environment.

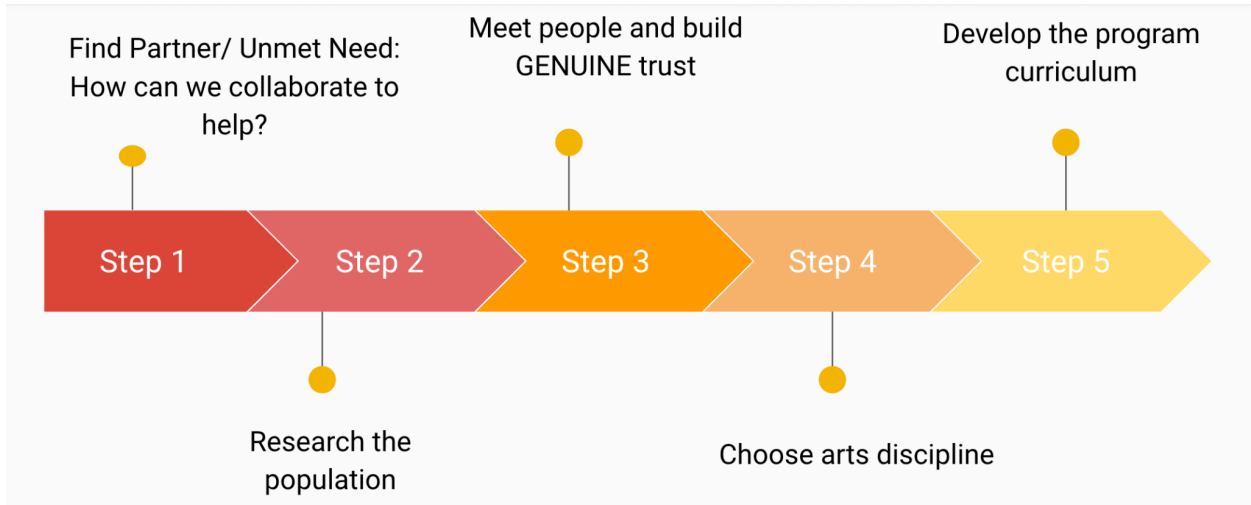
ReNew: This is a unique program that uses the tools of drama to encourage incarcerated individuals to build on their critical thinking, social, emotional, and interpersonal communication skills through the use of acting exercises and theatrical scenes. The program was created in partnership with the John E. Polk Correctional Facility & the ReNew rehabilitation program to address the Social Determinant of Social & Community Context.

IV. Developing and Modifying Arts Programming

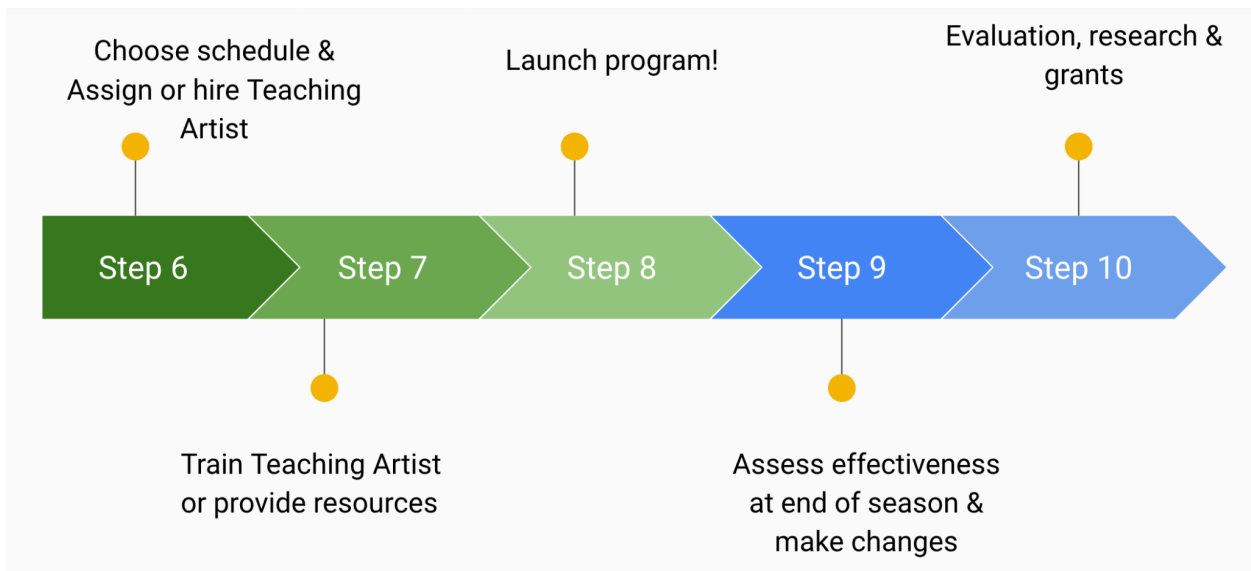
Making the arts accessible takes creativity, passion, and purpose. We use these determinants to gauge community needs across sectors and then seek to partner with groups that support those populations. We utilize a 10 step partnership model to create meaningful partnerships to best serve communities.

10 Step Partnership Model:

1. **Find a Partner** or identify an unmet need within your community that you can address with your skill, service, or resource.
2. **Research the population** you wish to provide programming for.
3. **Create genuine trust** and relationships by meeting with the partner or the people you wish to serve.
4. **Select an Arts Discipline** or choose a multidisciplinary approach to programming.
5. **Develop the program** keeping in mind the needs of the participants.
6. **Create a Schedule** noting the best days and times for the participants and hire the team you need to make it happen.
7. **Train the Teaching Artist** and/or communicate your vision and needs to any support staff if you are the teacher.
8. **Register** the participants & launch the program. Take into consideration any important contact information, medical emergency details, and photo release permission you would need to collect for the duration of the program.
9. While the program is in full swing it is important to **assess the effectiveness** and modify the content when needed. While you may have a great plan in place, it's important not to get too focused on your vision of what it should be, and instead, focus on the students and what they need it to be.
10. Upon the completion of the class, **evaluate** your participants with a brief survey. This data can be used to track research stats on this program and is very helpful when applying for grants.



Graphic: First 5 steps of the Partnership Model



Graphic: Steps 6-10 of the Partnership Model

Due to the nature of community arts and health work, a majority of the CFCArts programs are partially or fully grant-funded. This provides another level of accessibility to folks who would otherwise be unable to participate.

V. Creating An Inclusive Artistic Program

An example of the partnership model in action is our UpBeat! Program. UpBeat! is a performance group for teen and young adult exceptional learners. It is open to

actors with a variety of exceptionalities, including (but not limited to) autism, Down syndrome, and ADHD. UpBeat! produces multiple performances each year, including both in-person musicals and virtual short films with participants from all over the country. In 2020 this program won the Arts and Innovation Award through the National Organization for Arts and Health (NOAH). The program was created in partnership with the Down Syndrome Association of Central Florida to address the lack of opportunities that students with varying abilities have for artistic expressions after they age out of the public school system at twenty-two. The purpose of this program is an example of the Social Determinant of Health referred to as, Social & Community Context.

Defining the purpose and model of UpBeat! took extensive research and planning. In conclusion, the team determined that each season would focus on the following Creative Goals:

- Creativity and self-expression
- Techniques of acting on stage and/or on camera
- Group cohesion (aka working together)
- And, Basic dance skills

Additionally, the team created Individual Student Goals based on interactions with the performers and/or guidance from their care partners. These goals include:

- Improved self-expression
- Improved auditory processing skills
- Improved verbal and nonverbal communication skills
- Increased confidence and independence
- And, Greater creativity and imagination

Adaptation is key in order to create the best experience tailored to the individual performer. While pre-created book shows are a useful resource for creating theater, in this particular situation those scripts would not allow an opportunity for every student to excel at the level of which they are capable. Therefore the UpBeat! scripts are customized with roles and lines created for each student. For example: If a student is

working on language skills their character will have 3-5 word lines throughout the show focusing on the students' level of vocabulary.

In addition to the material being adapted, the method of instruction is also varied providing opportunities for full group and small group rehearsal activities. Additionally, performers are given the opportunity to rehearse scenes one-on-one with the director to build confidence. UpBeat! is also offered as a virtual class with students participating across the United States in order to provide further accessibility. The Zoom application is utilized to host rehearsals and record virtual short films. This method of instruction is also varied with performers rehearsing weekly as a full group, then recording their roles in one-on-one recording sessions with the director. The one-on-one recording sessions allow the team to get the best recording of each actor's lines that will later be compiled in post-production to create the short film.

Using technology in this way can be very challenging for both the performer and their care partner (many of which are older or retired parents.) Technical support is key in providing both the student and their support system with multiple resources to be successful. The CFCArts team provides how-to guides for each tech element and offers one-on-one tech support meetings for those who need further assistance.

The takeaway from creating a program like UpBeat! is that adapting the program model is just as important as adapting the content. While strategic planning and communication are required for any program, the one-on-one support time needed to create an impactful and truly accessible experience for such a population will require extra staff time and budget. With those elements in mind, we clearly evaluate the UpBeat! program each season so that we can best report its impact to grantors and individual donors. While the team recognizes the importance of the program through the quality of the performer experiences, it is necessary to collect quantifiable data in order to seek and maintain funding sources to make UpBeat! financially accessible to all.

VI. Sample Creative Writing Activity

As previously mentioned, the CFCArts team creates community arts programs in Music, Drama, Dance, Creative Writing, and Art. The following example is a creative writing activity combining two styles of writing. The primary focus of this activity is

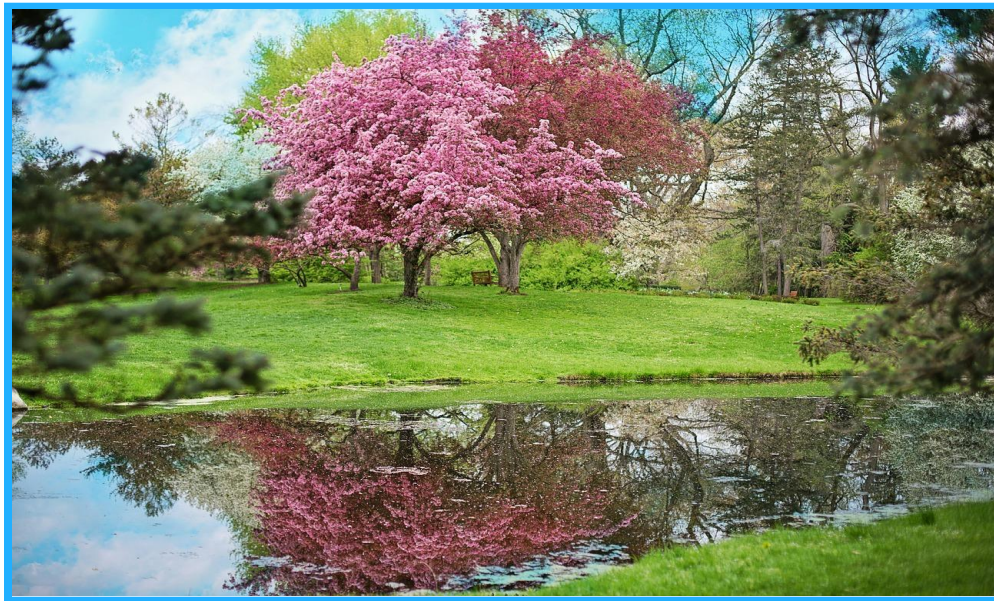
writing a poem using Ekphrastic Writing (writing with an image as inspiration) and Sensory Writing (describing something utilizing our senses.) The secondary focuses of this activity will differ based on the class, but typically the Teaching Artist will hone creative thinking, creative expression, and group cohesion.

Activity Process:

- Provide the class with an image or verbally describe a picture in detail
- Encourage the class to imagine being present in that scene
- Encourage the class to engage with their senses within that scene (The teacher may ask, “What do you ... See? Hear? Smell? Feel? Taste?”)
- Have the students create a Word Bank of responses
- Have students select and connect words and phrases from the Word Bank to create free form poetry

Sample Image of a Cherry Blossom Meadow:

Photo Description: This is a photo of a spring meadow with a cherry blossom tree in the middle. The meadow is made up of vivid shades of greens and blues. In the foreground of the image is a thin, clear, stream and the cherry blossom tree's reflection can be seen in the water.



Sample Word Bank from 3rd-5th Grade students with varying abilities:

The highlighted phrases in the word bank below were those chosen by the class to be incorporated into their poem.

River flowing water, birds chirping, breezes, rustling trees, people chattering on the benches, animals, leaves falling, leaves blowing on the trees, water splashing. The grass feels rough on fingers, water is cool, the breeze feels amazing, Relaxed, happy, wind blowing, light breeze, Comfortable, wet water, cool breeze, my park

Sample Poem:

Cool breeze,
Grass rough on my fingers,
The river is flowing,
The trees are blowing,
I hear the rustling leaves,
The park makes me feel amazing

The hallmark of this activity is how accessible it can be in both level and ability. By selecting a developmentally appropriate image to connect with the group, this activity can be enjoyed by Kindergarteners and senior adults alike. Outside of age, this activity can easily be tailored to meet the needs of classes with a variety of abilities. The activity can be easily modified as an individual assignment or group project. Additionally, the teacher can scaffold their involvement to encourage the class to think critically (allowing students to lead the activity) or help the students connect the steps of the process by being very involved (as in pointing and describing image elements). Furthermore, this can be an excellent assignment for building creative thinking for students with visual impairments and low vision through two simple modifications. The first is the use of engaging creative memory by the teacher verbally describing the image. The other is through encouraging the student to act out being present within the imagined location to better connect with their senses. By connecting to the source material through sight or imagination, the teacher can tap into the student's creative brain and unlock some beautiful poetry.

VII. Conclusion

Making the arts accessible is not some lofty goal that one needs extensive funding and support to achieve. In summary, it takes creativity, purpose, and partnership. To learn more about Central Florida Community Arts please visit our website: cfcarts.com. The CFCArts team seeks to be a resource to artists, educators, and administrators looking to bring affordable and accessible arts programming to their communities.