



Tabletop Session Summary

July 22, 2021

Summertime Arts Learning for PreK-12 Students

Presenters: Anthony Beatrice, [Boston Public Schools](#); Jordan C. LaSalle and Jeanette McCune, [The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts](#)

This tabletop discussion explored strategies and resources to increase access and equity in the arts.

Session Highlights

- » Boston Public Schools (BPS) serves more than 53,000 students in 123 schools with 300 teachers of the arts (i.e., dance, music, theater, media arts, and visual arts).
- » BPS offers several summer arts learning opportunities. The BPS Arts Intensive is held annually for two to three weeks in the summer and includes film, musical theater, band, and other offerings. The BPS 5th Quarter Portfolio is a five-week academic acceleration camp for students in grades 6-8 that includes instruction in the arts. Over the course of the program, students receive music and art twice a week.
- » BPS programming also includes career-connected learning. The Bloomberg Arts Internships with EdVestors is in its third year. It currently has 30 high school interns working in 20 arts and cultural institutions across Boston. The Boston Private Industry Council has supported BPS in its effort to provide students with paid arts opportunities afterschool (e.g., students are paid to deliver band performances or to paint city murals). BPS has a similar relationship with the Education Through Music – Massachusetts program, in which students receive training to give music lessons. This program also provides an avenue to help diversify the teacher pipeline for the arts in Boston.
- » Similarly, the Kennedy Center has had a partnership with the District of Columbia Public Schools since 1992. The DC Partnership Schools Initiative focuses on the development of the whole child, and equitable and meaningful arts education is an important part of the work. Activities include an annual arts festival with student artists/performers, and with partnership schools, professional development for teachers, in-school lectures and demonstrations, curriculum residences, and access to Kennedy Center performances.
- » The Kennedy Center has also worked with schools on summer programming for underserved students. They have been able to provide and support standards-based arts education programming, utilizing vetted teaching artists.

Shared Resources

- » [Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning Framework](#)
- » [Arts Impact Study](#)



- » [Bloomberg Arts Internship \(BAI\)](#)
- » [Boston Public Schools Partners Platform](#)
- » [Boston Public Schools Summer Stuff](#)
- » [BPS – 5th Quarter Portfolio](#)
- » [BPS Racial Equity Planning Tool](#)
- » [BPS – The Opportunity Index](#)
- » [BPS - The Partnership Fund](#)
- » [BPS Guide for School-Community Partnerships](#)
- » [EdVestors](#)
- » [Private Industry Council \(PIC\)](#)
- » [The Kennedy Center - Education Page](#)
- » [The Kennedy Center - Media & Interactives Page](#)
- » [Youth Arts Impact Network](#)

Questions and Answers on Summertime Arts Learning for PreK-12 Students

What are some of the biggest challenges in establishing partnerships? What are some creative solutions to maintaining partnerships?

For the Kennedy Center, it is important to make sure healthy relationships are established with the district and to examine how the district’s strategic plans and professional development experiences align with the partnering organization’s needs. Organizations should listen, develop trust, and collaborate. They should also ask what they can do to be a consistent presence and a priority. It is a process that takes time, but it is critical to listen, come in with humility, and know what the program is offering to the district and what value it adds. It is also important to be thoughtful and critical of programming to ensure that the arts education is meaningful and aligned with the district’s curriculum.

For Boston Public Schools, understanding that the number of schools a partner organization is working with directly affects the quality of the services delivered is important. As a result, the funding from the EdVestors program that typically goes to about fifty arts programs every year has now been limited to work with no more than three schools. Principals have welcomed this change with positive feedback. In addition, survey results revealed that partners work best within their region of the city (e.g., neighborhood partners).

The pandemic has also created more opportunities for collaboration and to breakdown silos. For example, the Mass Cultural Council, the Mayor’s Office of Art and Culture for the City of Boston, and EdVestors created a unique opportunity for all the arts partners and arts educators to come together each month to discuss what is going on in schools. It is a practice that they are hoping carries on after the pandemic.

What does it mean and look like to listen to partners and stakeholders?

When Boston Public Schools (BPS) shifted funding strategies away from being centrally funded to being school based using the Opportunity Index score, the schools took advantage of this moment to get input from families in selecting the partnerships needed in schools. In addition, BPS started using the Racial Equity Planning Tool to bring together stakeholders – families, students, teachers, and non-profits. They took a pause and looked at the data more closely before making any programming, funding, or policy



decisions. The tool helped to ask questions like “who are we targeting”, “does it fit the need and help close the gap that currently exists,” and “is the program culturally responsive?” One of the biggest challenges is making sure all partners and creative youth organizations are on the same page and using the same language as the district.

Are there any roundtable opportunities for educators who want to have a discussion with colleagues from across the city, and how do you best foster that?

In Washington D.C., there is a collective impact organization called the DC Arts and Humanities Education Collaborative. Other cities have similar spaces where educators can talk to one another and where arts and cultural organizations can talk to one another.

At the onset of the pandemic, roundtables were constant, and there was ongoing dialogue between educators through these roundtables. Some were specific to school-based educators and touched on a range of topics like transitioning to a virtual classroom and making sure students are logging in. The Kennedy Center had existing relationships with schools and was involved in emergency response conversations daily with different cohort subsets, arts managers, multicultural institutions, school-based educators, arts specialists, principals, etc. They discussed how to endure and thrive, what would happen to the sector when the pandemic ends, and what can be learned and kept from this time.

To foster these relationships, it is important to create an ecosystem of schools and organizations and to continue to build bridges. In addition to being willing to listen, it is also critical to be willing to change and adapt to feedback. If stakeholders who participate and share their experiences in roundtables do not see any changes, then the trust that was built over time will erode.

