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Americans for the Arts

SPRING 2015

THE SOURCE FOR ARTS PROFESSIONALS IN THE KNOW



Many roads can lead to systems-level change. When those roads converge, the intersection can be truly impactful. This is a story about Chicago—its people, its mayor, and those dedicated to making change, all driven by the hope that stems from the transformational power of the arts.

▶ Mayor Rahm Emanuel launches the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Arts Education Plan at Manuel Perez Elementary School.

THE WINDS OF CHANGE FOR ARTS EDUCATION IN CHICAGO



*By Jeff M. Poulin of Americans for the Arts and
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Five years ago, nearly 400 people set about tackling the seemingly intractable problem of providing arts education to all 400,000 students in Chicago's public school district, which contains more than 650 schools. A nonprofit, Ingenuity, was born out of this 18-month process, and in 2011 began its work with the City to prioritize arts education in a way it hadn't in 30 years.

Simultaneously, the Windy City was experiencing the winds of political change. At nearly the same time that Ingenuity opened its doors in 2011, Chicago elected its first new mayor in more than 20 years. Mayor Rahm Emanuel swiftly called upon the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) to seek community input to devise the City's first Cultural Plan in 25 years. Hundreds of people in

neighborhoods across the city attended community planning meetings for the plan, and overwhelmingly asked that the arts in learning be priority number one.

At the same time, major education reform was already under way, paving the road of opportunity for the arts in schools. Mayor Emanuel worked with Chicago Public Schools to lengthen the school day—at 5 hours and 45 minutes, it was then the shortest of any large urban district.

Ingenuity recognized the lengthening of the school day and the prioritization of the arts by Chicago communities as the opportunity the sector had been seeking. With the nimbleness of a new organization, Ingenuity coordinated with Chicago Public Schools to write the district's first Arts Education Plan to align with the City's Cultural Plan.



Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students perform for an audience, including three of the Honorary Co-Chairs of the Be Creative: Campaign for Creative Schools—Renee Fleming, Yo-Yo Ma, and Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

A PLAN FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

The school district’s Arts Education Plan contained five goals and 26 recommendations, including making the arts a core subject alongside math and science, setting a recommended ratio of one arts instructor for every 350 students, and encouraging a minimum of 120 minutes of instruction each week for K–8 students. With these recommendations and more, the Plan became the blueprint by which the arts could be systematically put back into Chicago classrooms and provide every student with access to the arts every week.

Another key recommendation of the Plan was the collection and use of data provided by schools and community arts partners to assess the baseline by which the district and Ingenuity could track progress. Ingenuity built the *artlook*™ Schools portal where Chicago Public Schools staff could securely enter their school’s budget, staffing, and partnership information.

In the first year of data collection, 57 percent of CPS schools had provided data via *artlook*™ Schools, and Ingenuity was able to release *State of the Arts in Chicago Public Schools Baseline Report 2012–2013*. The report set the baseline by which future reports would compare. It also provided an opportunity to check in with city and district leadership to determine what was needed to ensure the arts had a place in each student’s education.

The baseline report indicated that though there was clear work to be done, the district had a solid foundation on which to build. Ninety-four percent of all K–12 schools had a full- or part-time arts instructor on staff, and of elementary schools reporting their data, an average of 99 minutes of weekly arts instruction was offered.

The following year, the report illustrated a leap in participation from the 57 percent of schools in the first year, to a participation rate of 88 percent in year two. The report showed huge progress including the number of schools participating in the arts, the amount of funding dedicated to the arts, and the growth reported by schools that had participated in both years of data collection.

THE CHANGE-MAKER

Through this process, one key element allowed the plan to take hold: the support of Mayor Rahm Emanuel. The Mayor’s love for the arts stems from his personal experience in dance. He speaks of those years as providing him with the discipline that has served him well in his career as a U.S. Congressman, White House Chief of Staff, and now Chicago’s



Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel's support for the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Arts Education Plan includes an additional \$10 million investment for the 2015–2016 school year.

Mayor. He also recognizes that the arts foster creativity and innovation in students, setting them on a path toward a career in the 21st century workplace. Emanuel has said that in lengthening the school day, he was providing the time needed so that there didn't have to be a choice between math and music—that students could have both.

Along with advancing policy changes, Mayor Emanuel and Chicago's DCASE committed \$1 million to the Creative Schools Fund in 2013–2014, a fund managed by Ingenuity that makes grants directly to schools for materials, supplies, and community partnerships.

The momentum continued to build through the fall of 2014 when Mayor Emanuel stood with cellist Yo-Yo Ma, renowned soprano Renee Fleming, and dancer Damian Woetzel to announce Be Creative: Campaign for Creative Schools, which encourages corporate partnership with arts education to raise the \$38 million needed to institute all of the goals and recommendations set forth in the CPS Arts Education Plan. Furthermore, Mayor Emanuel announced an additional \$10 million that the City will dedicate to arts education in the 2015–2016 school year.

THE RESULTS OF CHANGE

Just a figment five years ago, Ingenuity, along with its partners in the arts and culture community, has been the change Chicago needed in arts education. Through community-led collaborations, mayoral leadership, and private sector partnership, the CPS Arts Education Plan has become a reality.

As of January 1, 2015, nearly \$12 million of the \$38 million has been raised, and the campaign has been bolstered by the Mayor's pledge of the additional \$10 million and his encouragement of corporate partnership for arts education. Looking forward, there is more to be done, including teacher and leader professional development, implementation of quality assessment, and continued support of the Creative Schools Fund; however the momentous strides since 2011 should not go unnoticed—the young people of Chicago have a great partner in Ingenuity.

QUICK LOOK

Learn More

Learn more about how Ingenuity is weaving data, advocacy, professional learning, and small grants together to advance the arts in Chicago.

- ▶ Visit Ingenuity's website, and check out the first and second reports, at www.ingenuity-inc.org.
- ▶ See Chicago first-hand and hear from Ingenuity staff during our Annual Convention, June 12–14. Register at convention.artsusa.org.
- ▶ Learn more about Mayor Emanuel's commitment to the arts in schools at www.ingenuity-inc.org/news-updates/ingenuitys-state-arts-report-released/.