

Guidesheet 1 – Checklist for Success: What Makes a Strong Project?

OUTCOMES

Overarching the entire project are the goals: What should happen as a result of the project?

- Students and community should be provided arts activities which increase:
 - Their creativity and willingness to experiment and risk;
 - Their knowledge about the arts and critical judgment;
 - Their ability to create art;
 - Their confidence in their artistic abilities;
 - Their ability to connect the art activities with other knowledge;
- The project should enlarge the ways teachers, administrators, artists, and the community think about arts education.

RESOURCES

Another concern that arches across the entire project is the combination of resources that best enable project outcomes.

- The project should depend on local expertise and support whenever possible;
- The project should invite and work with local organizations in the fields of business, service, and culture;
- The project should develop and depend on local leadership;
- The project should enlist the assistance of regional and statewide organizations in areas where the community lacks expertise;
- The project should complement existing school and community arts programs.

CREATING A COLLABORATIVE AND INCLUSIVE PROCESS

A project which is both collaborative and includes many voices will strengthen a community.

- The collaborative partnership should include school teachers, administrators, and board members, local artists, and community, represented by parents, organizations, ethnic groups, and individuals;
- The project's planning process should be inclusive and honor the expertise and values of each partner; it should ensure regular communication among all partners and with the community at large;
- The project design should provide a variety of forms of access appropriate to the community: meetings, one-to-one contact, surveys, hands-on participation.

ENSURING A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

The bottom line of any arts education initiative is the quality of the experience for the participants.

What project design features help ensure this?

- The project should establish project outcomes and artistic outcomes at the outset;
- The project should schedule sufficient time for planning and administration, and be sensitive to school calendars;
- The project should provide artists and teachers with adequate opportunity to plan and debrief;
- The project should provide artists and teachers with opportunities to work collaboratively;
- The project should schedule a minimum of five artist contacts for each classroom or community group;
- The project should provide artists with fair compensation.

CREATING A LASTING IMPACT

A worthy project should affect participants beyond its scheduled life. What design features help ensure this?

The project should:

- Be based on a clear community need;
- From the beginning, plan to sustain itself by exploring long-term fundraising, leadership and project development possibilities;
- Obtain the support of school administrators, community members, parents and school board members;
- Discover meaningful roles for parents and community members throughout planning and implementation;
- Work to develop within the community an awareness of the project and its value;
- Integrate project activities with the school curriculum, so they are replicated after the project's end;
- Be committed to evaluation and establish assessment goals at the outset;
- Be flexible and willing to make changes;
- Be feasible – within the scope of what the community can achieve.

DISCOVERING THE UNIQUE

A commitment to rural needs implies a search for project features that honor specific aspects of a given community.

For example, a set of project goals and implementation strategies might focus on:

- a unique source of community pride; or
- a specific landscape feature that has traditionally created community pride; or
- a particular ethnic mix and its art forms.

When such unique, locally appropriate strategies are created, the community's sense of project ownership increases, collaboration is energized, and more partners stay involved beyond the planning stage.

From **A Handbook for Rural Arts Collaborations**
1994

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