

My art teacher is a wonderful person who helps me anyway he can, He's cool



CORE *Arts*

Program Report: 1999-2007

Prepared for the
**Mississippi Arts
Commission**

by the
**Center for the Study
of Art & Community**

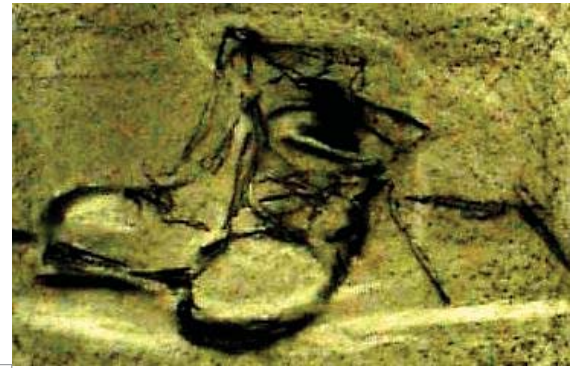


CORE

Arts



Cover: Student's Self-portraits, Pascagoula Opportunity Center 2002



In the spring of 1996, conversations among the arts council director, youth court judge and the juvenile detention center administrator in Columbus Mississippi led to the creation of an arts program for adjudicated youth in that town. This, small program, sponsored by the Mississippi Arts Commission, planted the seeds for an innovative youth arts initiative that has benefited young people in communities throughout Mississippi.

Over the past ten years the Mississippi Arts Commission's CORE Arts initiative has grown to include 25 sites and nearly 2500 students (2005-07) statewide. This report documents the program's development and summarizes research studies conducted between 1999 and 2007. It is intended to assist the Arts Commission and its community partners as they consider the program's future.

PROGRAM REPORT 1999-2007



My Life

my life is a house,
knocked down
and built up again

it sits perfectly still –
light coming in
the windows,

DRAWING, WATERCOLOR, CHARCOAL, PAINTING, PAPIER-MACHE, CERAMICS, WOODWORKING, INSTRUMENT MAKING, FURNITURE



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URNITURE DECORATION, MUSIC, POETRY, BIOGRAPHY, COLLAGE, PERFORMANCE, METAL SCULPTURE, MASK MAKING and more

darkness captured in the
basement
my life is a house,
and there is a key to every
door

Alicia Juitt
Walter C. Robinson
Achievement Center

The surprising success of the Lowndes County project prompted legislation for Mississippi Arts Commission (MAC) pilot arts program for adjudicated youth at three new sites. The program was called :

Core Arts.



BACKGROUND



Artwork from the Tie Plant Alternative School and the Family Network Partnership

History

In the fall of 1996, the Lowndes County Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) and the Columbus Arts Council jointly developed a proposal to the Mississippi Arts Commission (MAC) for a pilot research and development arts program for juveniles under the jurisdiction of the JDC. This program resulted in the development of an ongoing arts program in the detention center. The program was “built on careful artist selection and training, sustained arts instruction for the detention center’s youth in several artistic disciplines, and thorough evaluation.”

That evaluation showed a decrease in the incidences of violence at the center as well as improvement in behavior. It also showed that some participants were able to “make a connection between being in control of an artistic product and taking control over their lives.” The surprising success of the Lowndes County project prompted legislation for the Mississippi Arts Commission (MAC) pilot arts program for adjudicated youth at three new sites. The program was called Core Arts.

The three pilot sites were funded for a three year period. Each year, these sites were required to match MAC funding with an increased portion of the program costs. It was anticipated that as programs completed the three year funding cycle they would become self-sustaining. Over the next two years Core Arts added four new sites.

An evaluation conducted during this period (1999 -2001) by the Center for the Study of Art & Community concluded that the program’s impact on both the young people and the institutions involved either met or exceeded the outcomes produced at the Lowndes County program. The study showed that Core Arts participants showed significant improvements in school work, behavior and attitude. The research also showed that sustaining the program beyond the three year MAC funding period was a significant challenge for small community-based youth services agencies.

Among the successful applicants to the 2002 Core Arts program was a Greenwood-based program called Communities in Schools (CIS). At the time, CIS, an affiliate of the national organization of the same name, was providing tutoring services for at-risk youth throughout the Mississippi Delta. Unfortunately, their efforts were being eroded by the implementation of No Child Left Behind, which put the onus of helping low-achieving students directly on the school districts. Grounded in evaluation data from Mississippi and other states that showed that arts instruction improving academic achievement, CIS-Core Arts decided to focus on educational enhancement and workforce training through arts-based curricula. This arts-centered approach allowed CIS to expand beyond the diminishing opportunities of the traditional school setting into in alternative schools, after-school Adolescent Offender Training Programs (AOP), and state training schools for serious youth offenders.

As the CIS/Core Arts programs began to take root, participants showed positive changes in both school performance and behavior. (see *Chart A pg. 19*) Ongoing evaluations showed that both the quality of teaching artists and curriculum, as well as the continuity of the MAC sponsored CIS programs, were con-

tributing to these positive outcomes. CIS's capacity to garner support from multiple sources (criminal justice, youth services, education, arts) contributed both stability and credibility to their efforts. This diverse resource base also allowed partner agencies to develop long term programs which could never have been sustained on their own. In late 2002, these successes led CIS to reframe its mission as an arts-based youth development organization. They also prompted an increased demand for CIS programs throughout the state. In most cases CIS was able to respond to these requests.



Given MAC's interest in seeding sustainable programs for the State's growing population of adjudicated youth, the CIS approach made sense in a number of ways. Firstly, a vital state-local partnership had emerged to grow arts-based youth development in Mississippi. Next, CIS's cross sector resource base was providing maximum leverage for MAC dollars. (In 2006-07 CIS Core Arts brought in a little over six dollars for every MAC dollar it received.) And finally, CIS's growing network of artists, and local organizations had created an indispensable asset for both program development and advocacy. Taking this into account, in 2006 MAC formed a contractual partnership with CIS to advance the Core Arts model.

Environment

Poverty and Youth: Mississippi is a region rich in soil, heritage and culture. This richness is at times overshadowed by pockets of extreme poverty and enduring inequity. According to the most recent census, Mississippi, with a population of 2,844,658, has a poverty rate (19.9%) that is 38% higher than the national average (12.4%). These high levels of poverty leave their deepest mark on children and youth. The following statewide statistics bear this out.

- 15.5% of births in the state are to teenage mothers (US av. 4.9 %)
- 12.2% of households are run by single mothers (US av. 7.2%).
- 25.7% of students leave high school before graduating.
- 17.6% of teens are unemployed and not in school (US av. 9.0%)
- 27% of residents 25 years of age and older did not graduate from high school.
- 30% of the adult population is functionally illiterate.
- Less than 17% of Mississippi's residents have a college degree. (US av. 24.4%)

African Americans and low-income residents are more likely to be represented in these statistics than their counterparts. African Americans make up 36.3% of Mississippi's population; this demographic has been on a steady rise for the last three years.

The Role of Schools: With so many factors today competing for the time and attention of families and individuals, schools often exist in a vacuum, having little or no association with the surrounding neighborhood. In addition, many neighborhoods lack safe places for youth to gather safely with appropriate guidance and supervision. While public education has an instrumental role in tackling these issues, youth and community service organizations can aid efforts through supplemental after-school programs and services and creating opportunities for minorities and low-income youth.

**In 2006-07
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Juvenile Justice System: The juvenile justice system in Mississippi varies from county to county. Because it is a predominantly rural state with few detention centers or state correctional facilities, Mississippi's youth court judges are severely limited in sentencing options. Too often, a single probation officer serves multiple counties alone. Some communities use youth courts, some use juvenile detention centers, and others use the regular adult prison setting modified for youth offenders. Many communities also take advantage of adolescent offender programs or other community-based intervention programs. As a result, there are numerous approaches to juvenile justice, and different points of intervention along the way.

Youth Services: The predominantly rural nature of Mississippi coupled with the high rate of poverty also severely limits the extent of services available to youth. Community institutions, such as parks and recreation departments, often found in more urban settings, are scarce. Recreational opportunities are few; bowling alleys and swimming pools are on the wish lists of many Mississippi towns. Even movie theaters are disappearing from many Mississippi towns. Churches attempt to fill this void, but their offerings are limited by the typically small size of both their congregations and community resources. Rising gas prices have also diminished the ability of schools and community organizations to transport young people outside their immediate area to take advantage of state-wide cultural resources such as museums or the performing arts.

Core Arts Constituents: The primary beneficiaries of CIS programs are court-involved youth ages 12 to 17. However, Adolescent Offender Program (AOP) staff, alternative school staff and artists also benefit by learning from the students and attending staff development training. In addition the general public is invited to the student art exhibits and performances held annually. Finally, the community of family and friends that support and nurture each participant as they move through the youth court system are also Core Arts beneficiaries.



How did being a part of this project make you feel?

It made me feel like I was someone special.

It made me feel like I was welcome to this project. and no one mistreated me.

Happy and kind.

It made me feel good because before I couldn't draw or do anything.

It made me feel like I was an art teacher.

It made me feel that I'm a person that can show somebody else how to draw.

It made me feel good because before I put myself down and said I didn't know how to draw

"I thought this program was a waste of time when it first came here. But now I think its one of the most effective ways we have to engage these kids. I would definitely recommend this program to others working with difficult kids."

Alternative School Teacher

Core Arts Benefits

Educational Achievement: The arts offer an alternative for success and respectability for students who struggle academically. The discipline students learn through the arts often carries over to their study of other academic subjects.

Ownership & Self Empowerment: Working in the arts provides opportunities for self directed expression that is not wholly dependent on adults and their institutions. The arts help develop self-sufficiency and self-esteem in small, sometimes imperceptible, steps.

Improved Communication & Socialization: Artistic expression helps young people learn and improve communication skills and practice social interaction skills.

Coping Tools: Art making is a constructive outlet for dealing with confusion, frustration, and anger. Making structured contact with the imagination through "artwork" can also provide a non-threatening way out of painful isolation.

New Eyes-New Images: Artistic accomplishment can re-define a person's self-image and build new bridges to families and loved ones. Public performances and exhibitions help to humanize young people in the eyes of the general public.



Student work from Jackson County and Gulf Coast YMCA

CORE ARTS:

A Mississippi Model for Arts-Based Youth Development

Program History

1999-2001: The initial Core Arts program design was informed by similar efforts supported by other state arts councils, such as South Dakota's ArtsCorr and California's Youth Authority/UCLA arts partnership. Evaluations coming from both these and community-based programs, like Seattle Children's Museum's, showed dramatically reduced recidivism rates among serious youth offenders and a positive impact on school performance and behavior for youth identified as "at risk." These outcomes also helped the Commission make its case for support to the State Legislature.

Community-based Partnerships: From its inception, Core Arts was intended as an on-going effort by MAC to help the State Legislature address the dramatic need of reducing juvenile crime. To facilitate this, the program was configured to promote the creation of long term arts and youth services partnerships at the community level. The youth services and youth justice partners would come to the partnership with the understanding of the youth and their needs, and a knowledge of the juvenile justice and youth services systems. Arts partners (local and state-wide arts organizations) would know how to find quality artists, and bring an expertise in organizing and producing arts programs. It was also recognized that artist faculty members would be important partners. They would be included in the program planning and receive training on the complexities of working in a juvenile corrections environment.

Outcomes based: Based on the success of its Whole Schools arts education program, MAC understood that rigorous and challenging arts curricula, integrated into the state education framework, could produce significant and measurable positive outcomes for Core Arts students and the institutions that serve them. These articulated benefits were embedded in both the Core Arts program and evaluation designs. (See sidebar)

Building Relationships: Given the fragmented nature of Mississippi's youth justice and youth services systems, MAC also recognized that local partners would need significant time and resources to develop both a working relationship and a functional design for the program. As such, the first year of each site's three year grant was given over to conceptualizing and piloting their program design.

Design Standards: The selection of program sites was informed by a profile of seven program characteristics identified in research as contributing to sustainable arts programs in alternative settings. They were:

1. The program design is a full collaboration among all partners.
2. The program emphasizes the depth and continuity of artist/participant contact and collaboration over time.
3. There is ongoing, jointly developed training for youth justice staff and arts personnel.
4. There is an evaluation regimen that measures the program's impact on critical success indicators for both youth justice/services and arts program providers.
5. The program's activities, personnel, objectives, and guiding principles are integrated into the ongoing function and mission of the youth service/justice and arts agencies involved.
6. The program develops a stable, reliable, and trusted faculty of paid arts professionals.
7. The program is stable and sustained beyond the period of outside support.

2002-2007: When CIS joined the Core Arts initiative they brought a working knowledge of Mississippi's youth justice, youth services and education systems. This allowed them to build on the MAC Core Arts model in a number of ways.

Continuum of Care: The most important new program element combined the rigorous, artist-taught, skills-based curriculum advance by MAC with a delivery scheme that conformed to the juvenile justice cycle. This meant that court-involved youth would have access to arts programming at every stop in the, often scattered, continuum of youth justice/youth services programs operating in the state. (see sidebar, next page)

Both CIS and MAC recognized that adopting this continuum of care approach would pose significant challenges, not the least of which was that no youth program in the state had ever done it before. Given this, they began the slow process of building a network of local youth service and education partners. They quickly learned that making the necessary connections for their students would be intensely site specific and ongoing.

Restorative Justice: In a separate, but related strategy, CIS also sought to identify community-based arts programs for youth in their home communities. This gave students a safe haven in what otherwise might be a negative environment. When possible, younger students were referred to summer and after-school arts programs. Older students were referred to community college arts departments and community programs for adults. In this way, CIS was able to contribute to the "restorative justice" process whose ultimate aim is the successful reintegration of delinquents into the community.



Improved Social Problem Solving: Arts practice improves the ability to generate multiple and effective solutions, accommodate others and control impulses. Successful creators take responsibility for failures as well as triumphs.

Access to Success: Art making allows success for people who have been defined as failures.

Cost-Benefit: The arts are a low cost, non threatening intervention with measurable results. As expertise is gained students become self-sufficient learners.

Jobs & Increased Employability: Arts training offers new career options in a wide range of arts and arts allied fields. The arts teach valuable work related skills such as: logic, organization, flexibility, insight, creative teamwork and patience,

Mentorship: Often, student artists engage the most obviously accomplished adult they have ever encountered in the person of their artist teacher. The attention and high expectation of mentor artists can help move young people out the cycle of self-defeat.

CIS/Core Arts Continuum of Care

CIS and its partners seek to expand arts programming to juvenile justice sites that either feed youth into or receive youth from other successful Core Arts programs. Thus, interested and motivated young artists will be able to continue their instruction in each succeeding placement, building skills and confidence, and having a much more favorable attitude toward the new setting. Programs in the continuum include:

- *Prevention programs:* After-school arts programs to engage high risk youth along with programs at alternative schools where youth are remanded by schools for disciplinary reasons.
- *Intervention programs:* Arts programs in adolescent offender programs, detention centers and training schools) and
- *After-care programs:* Arts programs in alternative schools and Boys and Girls Clubs where youth are remanded by the courts after incarceration or as a sentencing requirement.



Local Design: Another innovation that came with the CIS approach was a distinctly localized design scheme. By engaging each site as a unique community of staff, educators, counselors, students and parents, they were able to establish the long term, trust-based relationships necessary for building sustained and successful programs. Artists coming into these sites did so with the understanding that their job was to integrate their programs into the fabric of these institutional communities. An important aspect of their “curriculum” was to extend the positive benefits of art making beyond the walls of the classroom. This has manifested through art shows and performances, published poetry anthologies and even staff class attendance.

Artist Network: The statewide, multi-site nature of the Core Arts program has given its arts faculty access to a network of colleagues for support and learning. To reinforce this, each year MAC and CIS jointly convenes an artists retreat to give the members of its extended faculty an opportunity share their stories and ideas with each other. This network has also opened up a world of employment and professional development opportunities outside of Core Arts for many of these artists.

Current Program

For the 2006-07 program year, the MAC and CIS/Core Arts roster has expanded to include 25 sites in 15 counties spanning the state (Hinds, Bolivar, Leflore, Grenada, Tallahatchie, Marion, Quitman, Coahoma, Tunica, Jackson, Warren, Clay, Montgomery, Yazoo and Washington) These included 7 alternative schools, 2 youth corrections facilities, 1 detention center, 7 Boys & Girls Clubs and 8 adolescent offender programs. Beyond its program sites, CIS and MAC have also established more than 35 partnerships with state and local education, youth services, and justice and arts organizations. (see list on page 13) And by the end of 2007 the MAC and CIS faculty of visual, literary and performing artists will have grown to 35.

Alternative Schools: These include artist residencies for both the fall and spring semesters at 7 sites: Garrett Hall (Greenville), pottery, drawing and creative writing; Tie Plant (Grenada), visual art and creative writing; North Delta Alternative School (Sumner), visual arts; Cleveland Achievement Center, creative writing and ceramics; and the Pascagoula Opportunity Center, creative writing and visual arts. Winona Alternative, creative writing and visual arts; West Point Alternative, creative writing, drama, choral singing and visual arts.

Youth Corrections: Core Arts operates ceramics and creative writing programs in Mississippi’s two state correctional facilities for youth: the Oakley Training School (male) and the Columbia Training School (female). Due to the demonstrated success of these programs, CIS has entered into Memoranda of Agreement with the Mississippi Department of Human Services to annually provide 50 weeks each of painting and drawing/ceramics classes and creative writing at Oakley and 44 weeks of the same at Columbia.

Adolescent Offenders Programs (AOP’s): CIS has operated year long visual arts and ceramics workshops (10 month residencies July-April) at the Greenwood Adolescent Offender Program every year since the spring of 2002. It replicated this program through a MAC grant at the Charleston Adolescent Offender Program in 2003 with music and visual arts residencies. These programs have run continuously since their inception. In the fall of 2002, CIS established a visual arts program at the Grenada Adolescent Offender Program. These residencies are considered very successful—student participation has been enthusiastic, and staff has reported the behavioral and developmental benefits of the programs. CIS’s leader-

The Artcartraz art car created by court involved youth in MS, LA and AL won 1st place at the Orange Car Parade in Houston

ship in delivering effective arts programming for court-involved youth has been recognized by the Governor's appointment of CIS Director Linda Whittington to the Mississippi legislature's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee.

After-Care Sites: Tunica Recreation Center, visual arts; Cleveland and Yazoo City Boys and Girls Clubs, visual arts; Grenada Boys and Girls Club, Winona sch. dist. summer camp and after school, visual arts, drama and choral singing.

In late 2005, CIS initiated new visual arts programs in the Leflore County Detention Center, Marks and Clarksdale AOP's. Between July 1, 2005 and 30th, 2006, CIS provided 1,458 Mississippi court-involved youth with artist residencies in the alternative schools, Adolescent Offender Programs and training schools described above. A separate MAC Core Arts grant seeded a program at the Gulf Coast YMCA in Ocean Springs.

Culminating Events: All residencies result in two culminating events per year, (December/May) where student work is presented to the public. Revenues from the sale of artwork go to the student artists. Creative writing students have their work published in an anthology which is presented to the public with student readings, and distributed state-wide. CIS has opened a permanent gallery space in Greenwood where student work can be continuously presented, providing students incarcerated at the two training schools a venue for their work along with the other students who are unable to interact with the public. Grenada AOP students and Tie Plant Alternative School students have initiated a monthly evening poetry slam at the Orleans Cafe in Grenada.

Artist Faculty: MAC and CIS supported personnel include a roster of 35 artists of whom 14 have master of fine arts degrees, all have extensive teaching experience, and all are current producing artists.

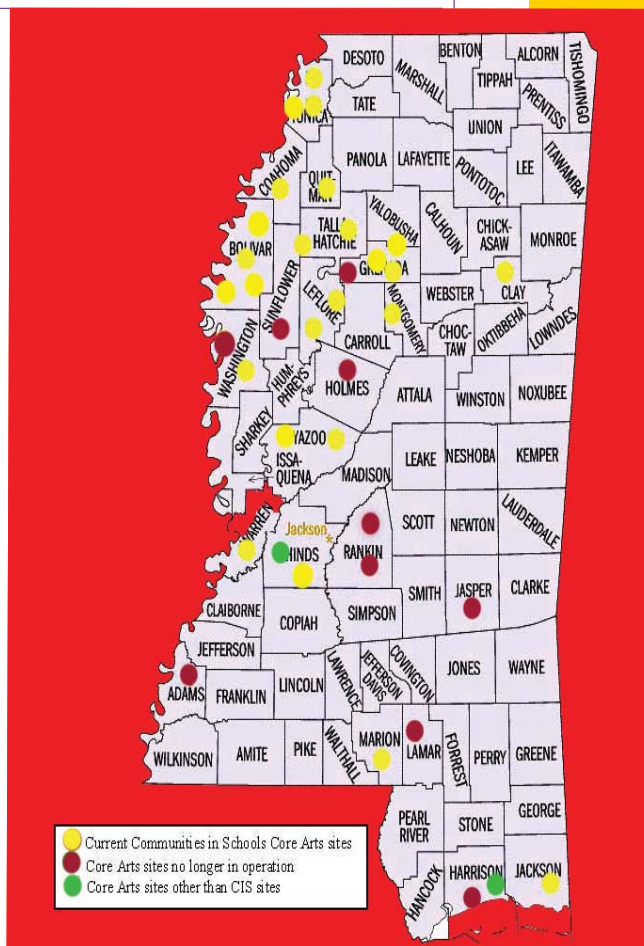
Statewide Institution/community partners:

State Agencies: MS Dept. of Human Services, MS Youth Court Counselors, MS Dept. of Youth Services, MS Arts Commission, MS Humanities Council, MS Attorney General.

Universities: Univ. of Southern MS, Delta State Univ., Jackson State Univ.

Adolescent Offender Programs: Region One Mental Health, Region Six Mental Health, Gulf Coast YMCA, Yazoo-Warren Mental Health

School Districts: Cleveland, Greenville, Leflore County, Pascagoula, West Point, Winona, West Tallahatchie, Grenada, Vicksburg, Oakley Training School, Columbia Training School, Jackson Public schools



*I can get
known faster
with this pen-
cil and piece
of paper than
I can on the
street.*

**Student Oakley
Training School**

Out

CORE *Arts:*

Impact on
participants
staff & sites.



comes



CORE Arts Outcomes 1999-2007

As was indicated earlier, a 1996 evaluation of a Mississippi Arts Commission (MAC) sponsored arts program at the Lowndes County Juvenile Detention Center showed a decrease in violence and improved behavior among participating detainees. The Core Arts program design that was informed by the Lowndes County's success also included a significant evaluation component.

To that end, in late 1998, MAC engaged the Center for the Study of Art & Community to assist MAC as it considered a number of questions related to the State's investment in arts programming for adjudicated youth. These were:

- ♦ What goals do the various partners and participants have for the Core Arts program?
- ♦ To what degree have these goals been achieved?
- ♦ What Core Arts program characteristics (i.e. curriculum, staffing, and program design) advanced or inhibited achievement of these goals?
- ♦ How can the Core Arts partners improve their efforts to evaluate the accomplishment of these goals?
- ♦ How can the partners sustain the Core Arts program beyond the initial research development phase supported by the MAC?

From 1999 to 2007 CSA&C conducted three studies on the impact and efficacy of the Core Arts Program. These were:

1999-2001: A two year study of Core Arts sites.

2001-2002: A one year study of three sites operated by the Jackson County Children's Services Coalition

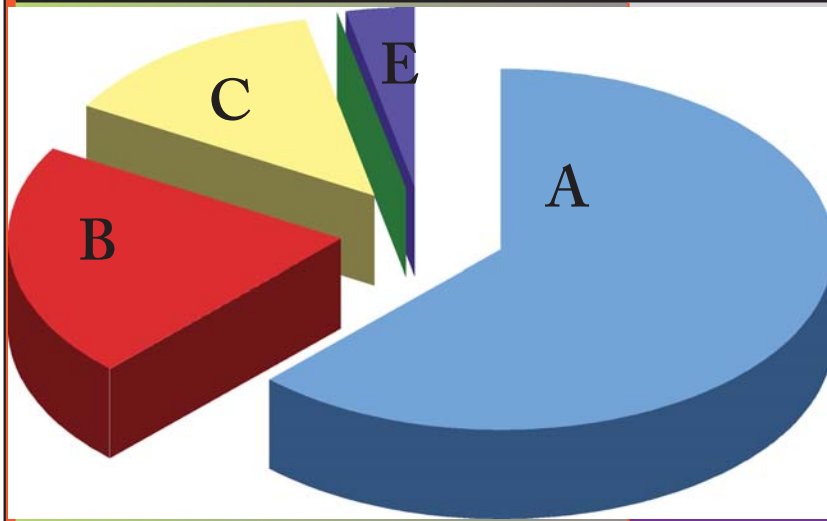
2006-2007: A one year study of three CIS Core Arts sites and one site operated by the Gulf Coast YMCA

The principal modes of inquiry for these studies were one-on-one interviews, surveys and a review of reports, publications, and documentary information from MAC and the program sites. Independent data on academic and behavioral progress was also obtained from some sites. Those consulted included a broad representation of program participants and administrators, teachers, counselors, and correctional officers working in the various Core Arts sites. All told, 308 participants and 101 staff members provided input for these studies.

Overleaf: CIS artist, Keith Fondren, gives guitar lesson to student at the Charleston AOP.

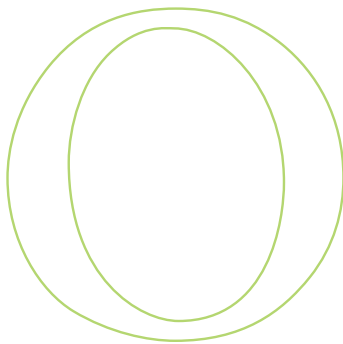
Right: Students at West Point Alternative School attending a Produce and Perform class.

STUDENTS GRADE CORE Arts



On a 5 point scale classes were rated 4.32.

Participants were asked to grade their classes according to the traditional A through E grading scale. The participating students represent a continuum of student ages and participation levels. No students gave their class a D grade.



verall the studies show that the Core Arts program had a measurable

positive impact on the students, artists staff members and organizations involved. Results from all three studies show that those most intimately involved with both Core Arts and the students describe the program as hav-

ing a positive influence on the lives and behavior of the participating youth and on the fulfillment of the missions of participating sites.



Impact on

Students

There is general agreement among youth development specialists that positive changes in attitude are a necessary first step for young people who are struggling in school and in the community. Students who feel good about themselves tend to do better in school and in their relationships with others.



Photo: Students working on creative writing in Dr. Jim Codling's Produce and Perform class

The three studies covered in this report show how when Core Arts programming contributes improved attitude other positive outcomes in behavior and school work tend to follow. The following are specific examples:

Behavior and Attitude

Improved behavior measured: A strong indication of positive impact comes from daily reports generated by Washington County Youth Court program counselors on nine critical behavior/attitude categories. This information was used to determine stu-

Counselor ratings of Core Arts students were 5.07% higher than during the 3 prior months.

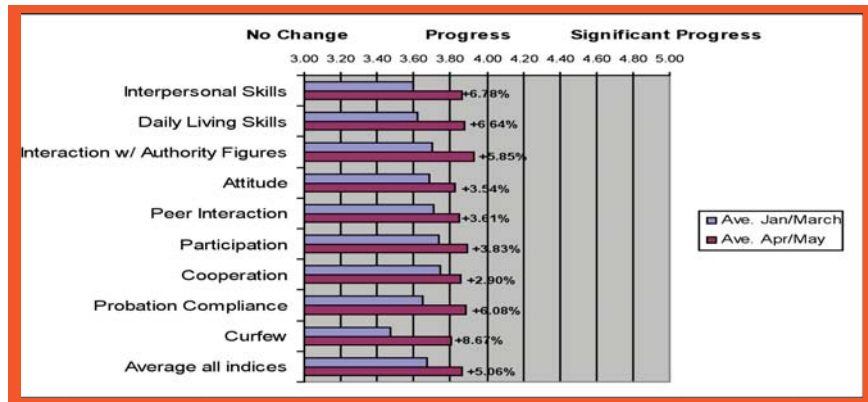
dent progress and placement in a program designed to promote healthy

behaviors and prevent further infractions. The data in Chart A on the next page shows participant improvement in all nine areas measured. Specifically, during the two months the new arts program was in place, counselor ratings of Core Arts students were 5.07% higher than during the 3 prior months of regular program offerings.

Staff report positive change: Chart B (pg. 20) shows that site staff and teaching artists reported significant improvement in student behavior in four areas. These were:

- Cooperation
- Incidence of Disruptive Behavior
- Self-control
- Interest in Other Programs

Chart A.



At the Cleveland Achievement Center 75% of the students improved their English grades at least one letter.

Fewer incidents, better attendance: The data collected at the Pascagoula Opportunity Center over the 2001-2002 school year showed a similar pattern of effect on participants. When compared to their pre-program performance, Core Arts students showed a 71% improvement in attendance and a 58% reduction in referrals for behavior problems.

Time matters: The data from all three studies show a positive correlation between time spent in the program and improved student attitudes and behavior.

Academic Performance

Improved grades: During the 2001-2002 school-year Pascagoula Opportunity Center data showed a 15% improvement in grade average among Core Arts participants compared to their pre-program performance.

Improved writing scores: Creative writing programs have had a dramatic impact on literacy scores: According to teacher records and state testing, students at the Oakley Training School raised their reading level as much as four grade levels after one semester of creative writing. Eighty three percent of the students in CIS' program at Oakley Training School improved their reading skills by at least one grade level, and 50% improved their reading skills by two to four grade levels.

At the Cleveland Achievement Center, 75% of the students improved their English grades at least one letter grade. This was significantly greater than the control group which did not receive creative writing.

Improved attendance: Data from the Ocean Springs Alternative School showed that school absences in 2001-2002 were markedly lower on the Tuesdays and Thursdays that Core Arts classes were scheduled (approximately 3 absences on Tuesdays and 5 absences on Thursdays, as compared to approximately 12 on Wednesdays, 25 on Mondays, and 20 on Fridays).



Educators report improvement: When asked to rate the impact of the art program on academic performance on a scale from one (no improvement) to five (great improvement), educators and school administrators (1999-2001) provided an average rating of 3.77. The 2001-2003 Jackson county research reinforces this finding. On a scale from zero ("no change") to five ("greatly changed"), site staff rated participants' change in academic performance an average of 4.32. The corresponding rating from Core Arts teaching artists was an average of 3.83.

Satisfaction

Classes and teachers highly rated: In the 1999-2001 study, students rated their teachers and classes very highly at all five sites. Over 68% gave their class an A rating, while another 23.1% rated their experience with a B grade. Over 84% of participants gave their art teachers an A grade, while another 7% gave the art teachers a B grade.



Students feel "good": When participants were asked how participation in the arts made them feel, the adjectives most frequently used were happy, good, great, excited and proud.

Problem students respond: In all three studies, site staff noted that some students who had exhibited generally poor attitudes towards their ongoing school activities were positive in their response to their Core Arts participation. Problem students also showed very high interest in continuing their involvement in the program

Some students impatient: The only negatives expressed by students involved their impatience with

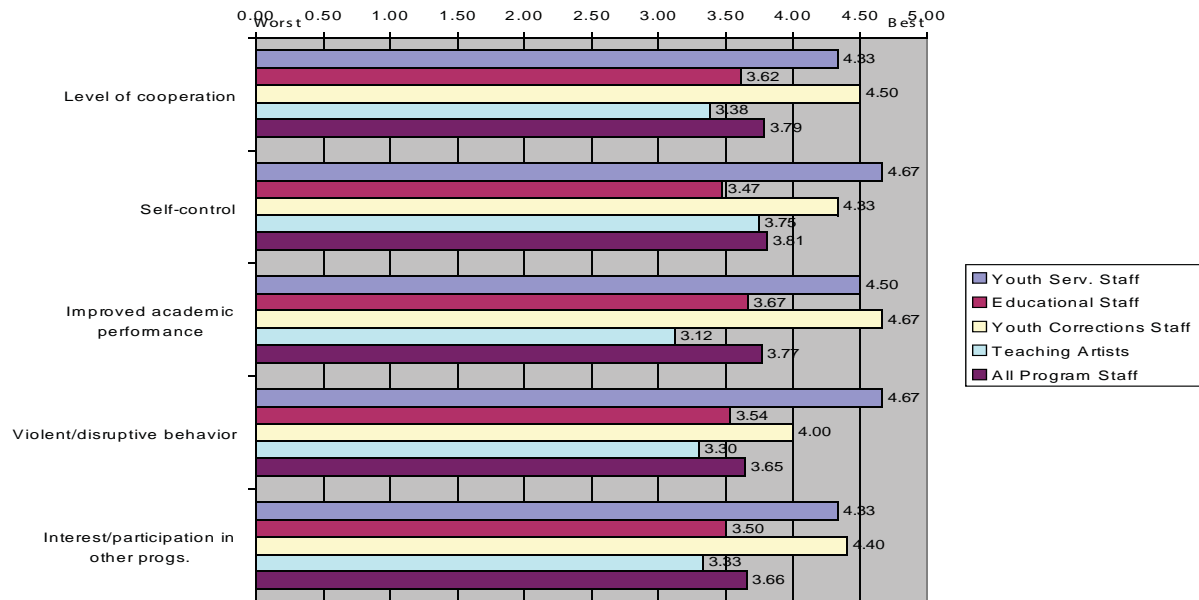
When participants were asked how participation in the arts made them feel, the adjectives most frequently used were *happy, good, great, excited and proud*

the time it takes to acquire artistic competency.

Principals see improvements: In surveys con-

ducted by CIS in 2006, 100% of alternative school principals reported that school attendance is up on CIS art days (generally two classes twice a week) in contrast to the days that art programs are not provided. Truancy is considered a status offense for youth, and improved attendance represents a direct reduction in juvenile delinquency. All alternative school principals, adolescent offender program directors as well as the training school principal have also anecdotally reported that CIS' programming has a beneficial effect on students' behavior.

Chart B



Staff Members say, “Violence Down, Self Control Up”

On a scale of 05, (with 5 - very high and 0-very low) staff cited positive changes in self-control (3.81), cooperation (3.79) and levels of violent behavior (3.85)



Impact on

Sites

In each of the three studies site staff responded positively about Core Arts' impact on their work and work environment.

Advancing youth development: When asked to rate the program's effectiveness, ninety three percent of the personnel involved with the programs responded with a very positive or positive rating. Staff members cited decreases in participants' idle time and violent behavior, as well as increases in participant self-control, positive incentives, and cooperation as factors contributing to positive impacts on staff's work.

Improved work environment: Staff members indicated that working with Core Arts allowed them to view youth more positively. They also shared that the program reduced tension between students and staff, provided a break in monotony for staff, and opportunities for staff and participants to learn and work together.

Effective partnership: Most program staff and support staff shared a common understanding of program goals and activities. Staff rated their clarity on various program roles and goals as very high, with an average rating of 4.47 on a scale from zero (very

Counselor ratings of Core Arts students were 5.07% higher than during the 3 prior months.

low) to five (very high). Both artists and site staff rated the program's effectiveness in the areas

of planning, communication, and cooperation as very high. Staff members expressed across-the-board interest in continuing association with the program.

Impact on staff: The three studies describe a group of artists who are overwhelmingly positive about the program's impact on their students and themselves. The 101 artists who participated in the research are practicing professionals in the visual, performing and literary arts. Sixty percent of the artists in the study entered the program with previous experience working with adjudicated or "at risk" youth. Fully 86 percent of the artists surveyed indicated that the program had a positive impact on them and their work.



Photos: Left: Students at Dr. Jim Codrings poetry class at West Point Alternative School; Right: Manchester Craftman's Guild Art Leadership Group.

Site staff reported that many of the conditions that have been problematic in their work with the youth were mitigated by the program. These included:

- **Decreased violent behavior and idle time among participants**
- **Increased student cooperation and self-control**
- **Reduced tension and monotony for staff and participants**
- **Opportunities for positive staff/ student interaction**

The site staff members who participated in the studies included teachers, counselors, youth corrections and court officers and school administrators. Our findings show that one by-product of the Core Arts program has been its positive impact on program work environments. (See table above)

When asked if they would recommend a similar arts program to their colleagues at similar institutions, all of the responding staff members indicated that they would. Another indication of staff satisfaction was an across-the-board interest in a continuing association with the program.

Negative comments from artists and site staff focused on logistical issues and program capacity. The primary concerns of staff came in the form of suggestions for program improvement. These included ideas for broadening and deepening the program, increasing the number of children served and improved communications.

Program Sustainability: The studies show that Core Arts programs initiated from 1999 to 2001 had some difficulty finding resources to sustain programs beyond the grant period. Of the program's original five sites two were able to sustain their programs. CIS sponsorship has shifted this pattern significantly with 25 sites now committed to long term programming. (See map on page 13)

Continuing sites are characterized by a commitment to incorporating the arts into the ongoing delivery of its youth services.

As such, each has increased their capacity to respond to local, regional and national program development and funding opportunities. Evidence of this includes:

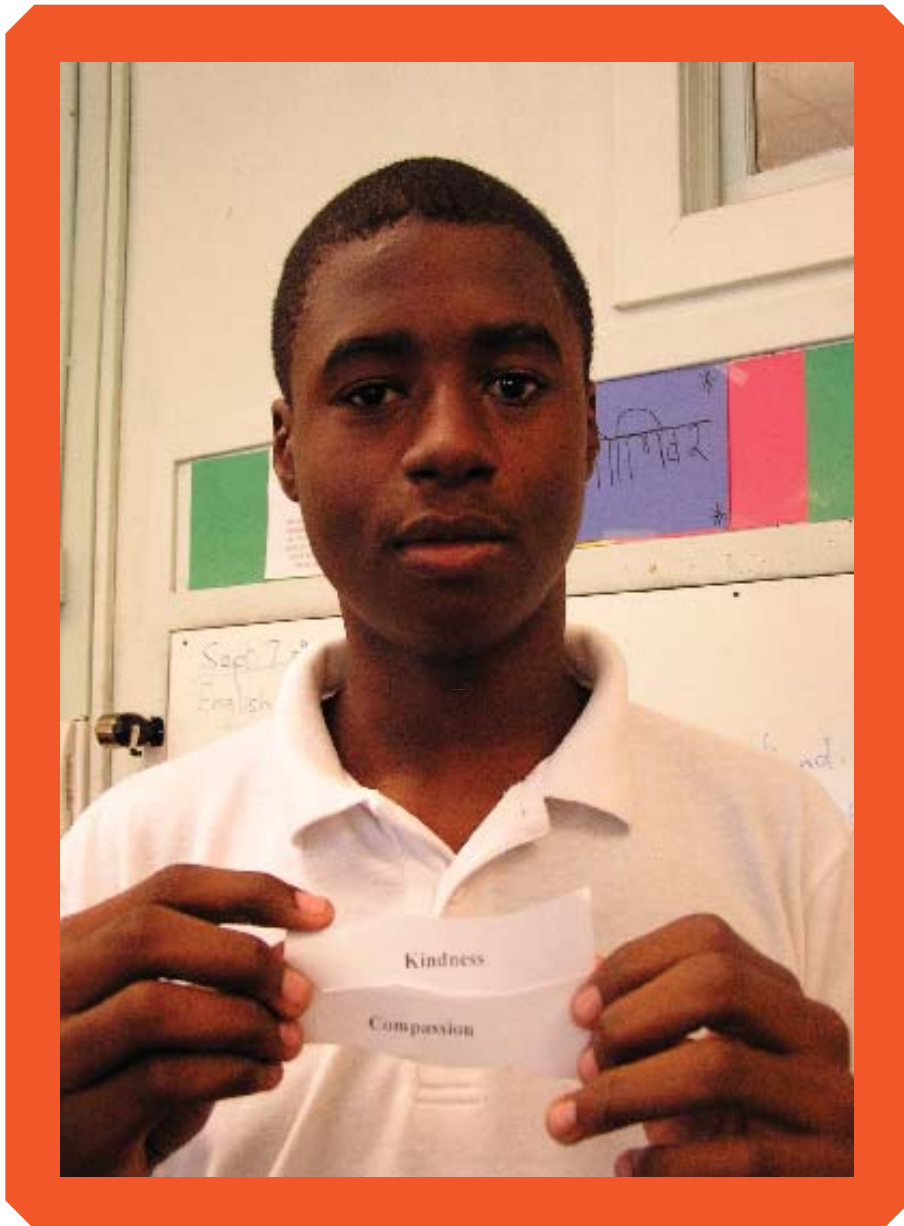
- Establishment of new links to regional and national youth arts programming and advocacy leadership
- Participation in a national youth arts training program
- Establishment of links with local and regional juvenile court systems and leadership
- Application to local, state and national funding sources



Program Characteristics that Advanced Core Arts Goals:


In general, the design and infrastructure of the Core Arts program have supported its goals and contributed to its successful outcomes. The following are specific program practices and characteristics that appear to have advanced the program's successful development.


- A commitment to **long-term support** by the MAC
- **Thorough planning** by the MAC and program sponsors and site staff
- **Effective administration** of program at the state and local levels
- **Regular and ongoing communication** among critical partner organizations and staff
- The ongoing availability and delivery of **technical assistance** by the MAC
- **A clear understanding of the programs goals** and objectives by key leaders and personnel
- A strong interest in and **commitment to positive youth development** among partner institutions




Core Arts writing student joins in poetry exercise


Recommendations

 **Share the Core Arts model:** The arts-based youth development approach described in this report stands out in a number of ways. First, Core Arts is the product of a public/private partnership that has provided the time needed for the program to develop and learn from its successes and failures. This has allowed the program to establish a record of effectiveness in the wide variety of environments that make up the youth development ecology across Mississippi. The program's methodical approach has, in turn, helped to build a cross-sector network of arts and youth services practitioners and organizations who both, believe in, and understand the program's effectiveness. This network, the program's commitment to sustained excellence, and its innovative continuum of care approach mark Core Arts as a particularly unique arts-based youth development initiative. The MAC program is also a strategic investment model for state arts agencies interested in working across sectors to help address significant statewide issues. Given this, the Core Arts model should be shared in and out of the state with relevant agencies and funders. An increased profile for the program will also help MAC and its community partners attract the resources needed to sustain its development.


 **Communicate Core Arts cost-benefit:** The positive impact on court involved youth documented in this report's Outcomes section has significant implications for Mississippi's resource strapped youth services sector. Despite the wide diversity of participants and site conditions encountered by Core Arts artists, per student costs for the program are both low and predictable. According to the Mississippi Department of Human Services Court involved youth in Mississippi cost taxpayers as much as \$115 per student, per day. (MSDHS reported that the FY 2004 cost of incarceration in a Mississippi training school was \$115 per youth per day.) These costs are rising as are the numbers of students who become involved in the juvenile justice system. A typical Core Arts student costs the program less than \$12 per day. More importantly, data from AOP and Alternative School staff point to this small investment as both advancing positive change and deterring recidivism among their students. Accordingly, each student deterred from further destructive behavior represents a significant savings to the community.





 **Explore Core Arts/Whole Schools cross pollination:** The Whole Schools program and Core Arts constitute a rich continuum of exemplary practice for youth arts education in the state of Mississippi. Together these programs have the potential to help Mississippi arts educators become innovators and leaders in the field of arts learning. To advance this possibility, MAC should initiate a cross-program planning process to explore the best ways to leverage and integrate each program's assets on behalf of the state's students and teachers.


 **Continue the development of the Core Arts network:** Core Arts has built a valuable arts-based youth development network across the state. The continued success of the program will only be enhanced by the expansion of this network. Because of its statewide reach and resources, it is entirely appropriate for MAC to have a significant role in the growing of this network. As a first step the Core Arts and Whole Schools networks should be integrated.


The MAC program is also a strategic investment model for state arts agencies interested in working across sectors to help address significant statewide issues.

 **Create a program manual:** A manual can be a core resource for this type of program. The manual should articulate the ideas and philosophies represented in Core Arts' evolved pedagogy and practices. It should also contain relevant material from the arts and youth and human services sectors. This material would be specific to the curriculum of the proposed Core Arts Training. It can also be used to share the Core Arts Model in and out of the state with interested parties.

 **Develop a Core Arts Training Institute:** Like the MAC's Whole Schools training program, a Core Arts Institute would be aimed at increasing the quality, depth, and sustainability of current and future arts-based youth development programs. It would also become an ongoing organizational and community resource that would contribute to development of rigorous standards for community youth arts collaborations. Exemplary teachers from both Whole Schools and Core Arts should provide master mentoring and best practice training for both programs.

 **Establish new university partnerships:** Early in the Core Arts program history, a significant partnership was forged with the Mississippi University for Women to document and evaluate the arts program at the Lowndes County Juvenile Detention Center. A later program was sited at the Family Network Partnership program at the University of Southern Mississippi at Hattiesburg. New, more formal relationships with the state's institutions of higher learning would benefit the program in two specific areas: 1) The training of new artist faculty members needed to increase program capacity, and 2) Research on the program's impact on participant recidivism.

 **Establish new links with regional and national youth arts programs and advocacy networks:** In 1998, the first three MAC sponsored Core Arts sites were invited to a training institute organized by the Technical Assistance Program for "Arts Programs for Young Offenders in Detention and Corrections," a federal initiative between the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). This interaction provided the Mississippi attendees a valuable opportunity for learning and exchange. It also brought the nascent Core Arts effort to the attention of leaders and colleagues in the arts-based youth development community. Since that time, the arts-based youth development field has developed and matured significantly. Now that Core Arts has established itself as a model public-private arts-based youth development partnership, the program should make efforts to reconnect with colleagues in other states and nationally.

 **Continue linkage with juvenile courts.** Forging a relationship with juvenile judges could be very beneficial to sustaining an arts-in-juvenile-justice continuum. This has become a "best practice" tenet among a number of Core Arts sites. Where possible, the practice should be expanded and integrated into each site's long term plan.



MAC Director Malcolm White and Dr. David Dagnault Grenada School Dist. Superintendent discuss a student mural with Core Arts artist Robin Whitfield.

Recommendations

Continue to link Core Arts partners with local arts agencies.

From the time of its inception in Columbus, Core Arts has had a history of developing partnerships with local art councils. Arts councils in Greenville, Hattiesburg, and Pascagoula, Ocean Springs and Jackson County have all played a key role in supporting the advancement of the program. Given the program's emphasis on sustaining participant's arts involvement at the community level, relationships with local arts councils should be expanded where possible.



Continue Ongoing Evaluation and Planning: The gathering of information to inform ongoing program development will be critical for the program's sustainability. This is particularly true with regard to the programs impact on the continuum of care and participant recidivism. Continuing assessment will help the program discover the critical patterns and relationships that will make for an even more effective design. This information will strengthen program advocacy and also make the model more relevant and useful to others in and out of the state.



Whole Schools and Core Arts constitute a rich continuum of exemplary practice for youth arts education in the state of Mississippi. Together these programs have the potential to help the State's educators become innovators and leaders in the field of arts-based learning.

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CSA & C



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CSA&C is an association of creative leaders from business, government and the arts who have succeeded in building bridges between the arts and a wide range of community, public and private sector interests.

CSA&C has over twenty-five years experience building arts partnerships in educational, community and social institutions. We provide expert guidance for developing artistic, educational, funding, community development and political collaborations among artists, arts organizations and school and community based partners. CSA&C's clients include: artists and arts organizations, educational, human service and criminal justice agencies and the business and philanthropic communities.