



CASE-MAKING FACT SHEET # 5

“HEALTHY CHILDREN PARTICIPATE IN THE ARTS”

Children are not deemed healthy simply because they have a roof over their head. Family conditions, economics, educational, and individual capacity shape healthy children. And, children don't get there by themselves. The Arts and social policies that support and enhance communities and cultural development help. Children that are successfully engaged in community arts experience increased confidence, emotional control, social connectedness and learning—key components of healthy development.

THE ARTS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN AT LEAST 7 DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH AS DEFINED BY HEALTH CANADA:

The arts and culture play an important role in “at least seven of the twelve determinants of health defined by Health Canada” which includes personal confidence, control, social connectedness, education, and a supportive physical environment”

“Arts and Culture in Medicine and Health: A Survey Research Paper” N.J Cooley, 2002, Pg. 19 (1)

The “arts” as a sector can help sustain, build, and grow healthy children by addressing these issues. Cultural exposure and art experiences gives children and youth the opportunity to learn in untraditional ways. This is of particular importance with at-risk kids who typically are failing in school. Learning in and through arts experiences increases their engagement and aptitude to learn, drawing them into an activity versus increasing their participation in at-risk behavior like drug and alcohol abuse.

Take dance for instance.

DANCE IS A CREATIVE and usually a collaborative activity that encourages many benefits like:

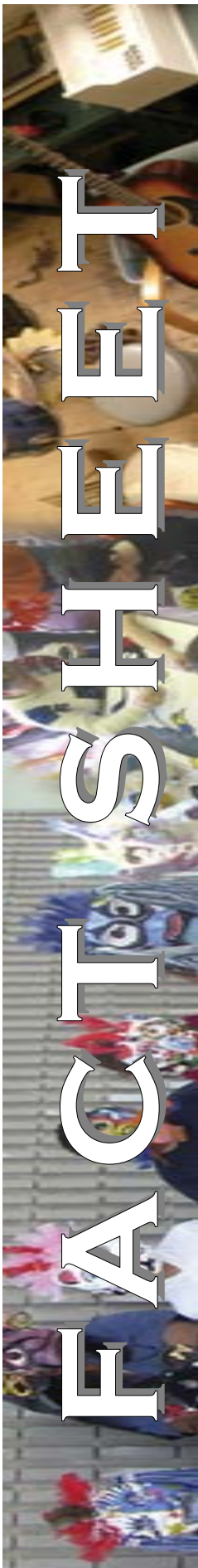
SOCIAL BENEFITS: “Improved general and psychological well-being; greater confidence and self-esteem; increased trust; better social skills; reduced social isolation and exclusion”

PHYSICAL BENEFITS: “Better coordination, agility and flexibility, better balance and spatial awareness; increased physical confidence; improved mental functioning; and better weight management.”

“Dance In Health: The Benefits For People of All Ages”, Arts Council of England,, Marston Book Services, Pg. 3,(2)

Dance “has a particular appeal to a number of groups that may not readily engage with traditional sports—young women, older people and culturally diverse groups, for example.”

“Dance In Health: The Benefits For People of All Ages”, Arts Council of England,, Marston Book Services, Pg. 3,(3)



“While learning in other disciplines may often focus on development of a single skill or talent, the **ARTS** regularly engage multiple skills and abilities. Engagement in the arts-whether the visual arts, dance, music, theatre or other disciplines-nurtures the development of cognitive, social and personal competencies.”

“Champions for Change: The Impacts of the Arts on Learning” Compilation of Studies, The Arts Education Partnership, Pg 1X, (4)

IT’S JUST NOT DANCE THAT CONTRIBUTES TO HEALTHY CHILDREN!

(ALL) community-based art programs are not only beneficial because they expose children and youth to the skills and creativity of the arts but because they also have the potential of contributing to their overall well-being as promising child development initiatives.

“National Arts & Youth Demonstration Project”, R. Wright, L. John, D. Offord, W. Rowe, McGill University, 2004 , Pg. 21(5)

Active engagement in arts activities is a preventative approach to healthy development. Connecting with children fosters the development of social capacity, healthy relationships and strong community ties. It is a proactive step that embraces the concept that children and youth can form building blocks outside their home environment that provides mentoring, opportunities for skill development, and increased social capacities through unique learning environments which reach beyond the “creative” component of art. If engaged in creative activities for more than three hours a week, attributes like self esteem, academic abilities and conflict resolution are positively impacted. This is particularly significant for at-risk and homeless youth whose problem solving abilities, and marginalized status keeps them at-arms length to community-based art programs. It also decreases cost associated with Youth involved in the healthcare system: Youth engages in quality arts programs can be caught before they reach social services.

The National Arts and Youth Demonstration Project evaluated community-based arts programs in communities in Montreal, Winnipeg, Toronto, Vancouver, and a rural town in Ontario. 183 children between the ages of 10-15 years participated in structured arts instructions.

The report found that **direct** outcomes in high quality arts programs showed statistically significant improvement in all four categories related to psychosocial functioning, program participation and enjoyment, art skills development, task completion, and pro-social skills.

- Increased Confidence
- Improved Interpersonal skills
- Improved Conflict Resolution Abilities
- Art Skill development

“National Arts & Youth Demonstration Project”, R.. Wright, L. John, D. Offord, W. Rowe, McGill University, 2004 , Pg. 16 (6)



The Arts impact both the child and the social context that that child grows up in!

Culture provides the means to build social capital, and community based art programs promote social connectedness in communities. Participation in community-based programs strengthen ties to the community alleviating isolation, and fostering various forms of diversity which is integral to healthy children. Not only are children given an opportunity to develop mentors, and work cooperatively, opportunities for sharing cultural experiences thereby increasing tolerance and building self-esteem within the community. As Gavin Sheppard of ICVisions, a community arts centre noted, the arts give youth hope and a place in the world.



“...Dialogues that began around hip hop in the IC Visions studio turned into dialogues about the bigger picture, such as the potential role and place of youth in society. “That’s how we do it,” he exclaimed, drawing attention to the potential of the arts to trigger youth’s imagination, critical faculties and contribute to their conscientization, in the process nurturing more active forms of civic engagement and participation in society”

“On the Use Of The Arts” Youth on Youth, Pg. 32, (7)

TODAY’S ENVIRONMENT POSES MANY CHALLENGES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH:

1. Adolescents are Under Stress: Adolescents and young adults experience higher levels of work stress than do older workers, and cite school as their greatest source of stress, while having to deal with rapid physiological changes interacting with other stress factors. The most frightening indicator is the steady.... and significant increase in the suicide rate for 15-19 year olds. Research suggests that between 17% and 22% of our children suffer from one or more psychiatric disorder.

2. Social Supports Are Changing: The nuclear family is changing as the diversity of family structure has increased. Children face changing patterns of support, which puts increased emphasis on schools and communities. Shrinking school budgets has refocused education on to “the Basics ignoring programs like the arts that encourage cohesiveness. While most Canadian cities provide recreational programs, almost all charge user fees and nearly half of poor families say is a barrier to their participation is the cost.

3. Culture Is An Important Determinant of Health: Children are at risk of being marginalized with such a diverse ethnic population **Ignoring the cultural components of a community can have a devastating effect on a child’s healthy development.** First Nations children paid a significant price from being alienated from traditional cultural forms of expression like drumming, singing and art. Youth experienced significantly high suicide rates, alcoholism, and low self-esteem not to mention severe marginalization.

“Healthy Development of Children and Youth” Public Health Agency of Canada,,2002, Pg16-19”(8)

ACCESS TO THE ARTS IN STRUCTURED PROGRAMS FOSTER HEALTHY CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

- Positive peer relationships
- Promotes higher self-esteem
- Decreases participation in negative behaviour
- Keeps kids physically fit

FOOTNOTES

1. "Arts and Culture in Medicine and Health: A Survey Research Paper" N.J. Cooley, 2002, Pg. 19 (1)
2. "Dance In Health: The Benefits For People of All Ages", Arts Council of England,, Marston Book Services, Pg. 3, (2)
3. "Dance In Health: The Benefits For People of All Ages", Arts Council of England,, Marston Book Services, Pg. 3, (3)
4. "Champions for Change: The Impacts of the Arts on Learning" Compilation of Studies, The Arts Education Partnership, Pg 1X, (4)

5. "National Arts & Youth Demonstration Project", R. Wright, L. John, D. Offord, W. Rowe, McGill University, 2004 , Pg. 21 (5)
6. "National Arts & Youth Demonstration Project", R. Wright, L. John, D. Offord, W. Rowe, McGill University, 2004, Pg. 16 (6)
7. "On the Use Of The Arts" Youth on Youth, Pg. 32 (7)
8. "Healthy Development of Children and Youth" Public Health Agency of Canada, 2002, Pg16-19" (8)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. "Arts and Culture in Medicine and Health: A Survey Research Paper" N.J. Cooley, 2002
2. "Champions for Change: The Impacts of the Arts on Learning" Compilation of Studies, The Arts Education Partnership
3. "Dance In Health: The Benefits For People of All Ages", " Arts Council of England,, Marston Book Services

4. "Healthy Development of Children and Youth" Public Health Agency of Canada, 2002
5. "National Arts & Youth Demonstration Project", R.. Wright, L. John, D. Offord, W. Rowe, McGill University, 2004
6. "On the Use Of The Arts" Youth on Youth
7. " 40 Developmental Assets" Search Institute, [www. search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)

WEBSITES

1. www.mcgill.ca/files/maydp/naydpbooklet.pdf : National Arts and Youth Project
2. [www. bcartscouncil.ca/pdf/asurveyresearchpaper.pdf](http://www.bcartscouncil.ca/pdf/asurveyresearchpaper.pdf) : Arts and Culture In Medicine and Health
3. [www. artscouncil.org.uk/publications](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publications) : Dance In Health, The Benefits for People of All Ages
4. www.pcah.gov : Champions of Change
5. [www. communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2005/09](http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2005/09) : What's Revolutionary About Valuing Assets as a Strategy in Cultural Work
6. [www. search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org) : Practical Research Benefiting Children and Youth



580 King Street West, 2nd Floor ■ Toronto, Ontario ■ M5W 1M3

416.536.6504 ■ info@artsnetwork.com

www.artsnetwork.ca