Arts and Trauma Teaching Artist Residency Program

Mid Term Report

4/15/19

Program Overview and Mid-Term Goal

In response to the 2017 wildfires, Creative Sonoma designed and implemented a program to place specially trained teaching artists in Sonoma County schools to help alleviate the trauma that students had experienced. Forty-six Arts and Trauma Teaching Artist Residencies were offered free of charge to Sonoma County schools from May - December 2018. Residencies were also offered at each of the nine Boys and Girls Club summer camps in Sonoma County. In October 2018, the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) offered to partner with Creative Sonoma to support continuing these residencies. After reviewing artist and classroom teacher evaluations from Phase 1 and reflecting on this new opportunity, Phase 2 was launched in late October 2018.

Creative Sonoma had established a directory of teaching artists trained to teach in the program during Phase 1. Our recruitment efforts expanded in Phase 2 to reach additional artists. Recruitment efforts included marketing in our newsletters, social media, and website, as well as contacting 15 local arts organizations and following up with artists who had inquired about the opportunity. Creative Sonoma searched for outstanding teaching artists interested in learning more about the program. After submitting bios and references, artists were screened for qualifications necessary to successfully work with K-12 students. Our teaching artist search included an effort to represent more art genres — dance and music — and artists qualified to teach additional age levels including TK and high school.

Twenty-six artists interested in the program were required to attend a one-day training in December. The training included an overview, history, and mission of the residency program. Additionally, an intensive unit on trauma was presented by Child Parent Institute (CPI). Discussions included identifying and recognizing trauma and understanding its effects, particularly on students. CPI shared information on using a strength based approach and how to create a trauma-informed toolkit. The day included a session by a panel of teaching artists who had successfully worked in Phase 1. The panel presented to the group in a Q&A session, sharing their experiences, successes, and challenges. To follow up the day of training, artists were surveyed about their interest in participating to help them understand the expectations. Fifteen artists moved forward and submitted residency plans to Creative Sonoma.

With a complete package of residency information available, the grant application for schools went live on January 8, 2019. Various school districts throughout the county were designated by SCOE as priority districts as a result of experiencing direct impact from the firestorm of 2017. With the additional disaster of flooding in 2019, West County also became a focus. SCOE communication resources were utilized to
broadcast the message to Sonoma County schools, including a note from Dr. Herrington. Due diligence was used in trying to contact these priority schools directly. Some of the artists utilized their direct contacts within schools on the priority list.

In all, 105 requests for school residencies were made. Of the 31 schools that applied, 22 are in the priority districts. The remaining 7 schools reach a broad geographic range: Cloverdale, Geyersville, Healdsburg, Rohnert Park, Cotati, and Petaluma. The total residencies amongst these schools is 87. In order to maximize the reach of the program, residencies were not approved for schools wishing to work with students who had previously participated. A residency was also offered at the Integrated Wellness Center in an effort to reach even more students and their families. One residency equals 6 hours of instruction for a classroom. The total number of contact hours with students will be 522 hours.

The artist fees and supplies for 87 residencies for this phase total approximately $47,860. The December trauma training totaled $3,665.

The art form with the most requests was visual art, which may be a result of the fact that it is the genre most represented among our artists. This was followed in popularity by creative dance and theater residencies. The most requested activities were mask making, fairy house creating, and writing a script.

**Evolution**

Having completed 47 residencies during Phase 1, Creative Sonoma had gained the experience to know how to make improvements in Phase 2. Our residency focus evolved to not only respond to trauma, but to also build resilience through collective, creative experiences. These artistic experiences provide a process for introspection and self-awareness and lead to a finished classroom product representing empathy and understanding.

Creative Sonoma teaching artists have learned that childhood traumas do not just come from fires and floods, and not just to students. Teaching artists encounter many different kinds of traumas in the classroom. This has been evident as well for classroom teachers in responding to their own feelings about trauma. Teachers benefit from the residencies as they work to support their students through traumatic times. The teaching artist provides an experience that involves risk and trust, creativity and structure. The residencies allow classroom teachers to see their students in a new light. The classroom teacher follows the artist’s lead, allowing someone else to take the wheel to guide the student experience.

Phase 2 included three new elements. First, two artists are working in special education classrooms — one artist is presenting visual art in a moderate-severe specialized health services classroom. The other classroom of moderate to severe needs students is combining the residency with same-age peers to work together on peer integration, fine motor work, creative thinking, problem solving, and acceptance.

Second, we have connected our teaching artists with SSU teacher education programs. Two teaching artists presented arts integrated lessons to a class of 14 SSU student teachers, demonstrating how visual art can increase and deepen student learning. There is interest by SSU in growing this connection with the teaching artist community.

Third, schools are receiving window decals and posters as an “Arts and Trauma Residency School” to recognize their participation. It is important to acknowledge and celebrate each school’s commitment to support and growth.
Evaluation

Evaluations will be collected from both participating teachers and artists for the 87 spring residencies taking place through June 2019. Creative Sonoma will review and summarize the data and reflections of the spring residencies.

A teaching artist convening will be organized by Creative Sonoma. The convening will occur in June and allow artists to reflect on their work and provide an opportunity to share strategies and learn from one another before fall residencies begin.

Next Steps

The remaining funds from SCOE will provide an opportunity to not only offer additional school residencies, but also build sustainability for the program in several ways. Remaining SCOE funds will be used to provide additional trauma training for teaching artists. Additional training in arts integration will be offered for teaching artists, student teachers, and administrators/teachers. An artist residency effectiveness assessment will be created to measure the impact of residencies on the students, teachers, and teaching artists. Finally, the results will be documented in a format that allows SCOE and Creative Sonoma to share and promote the benefits and gains made possible through this program.

Creative Sonoma is dedicated to advancing and supporting the creative community on Sonoma County.