

# **ARTS OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CHICAGO**

## **Abstract**

Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago examined the scope and character of non-school arts opportunities for young people in Chicago. Whereas earlier studies have looked at programs deemed exemplary or those that focus on “at-risk” children, this was an effort to take stock of *all* programs for children within a geographic area. The purpose of the strategy was to share the information we gathered with directors, staff, and funders of arts programs for young people so that they can consider the implications of the findings for their programs for young people; and to explore a strategy for examining other categories of the primary social supports.

Through a citywide survey, the research team identified 498 programs that offer arts experiences during out-of-school time. Many more opportunities are offered by parks, social service agencies, and recreation centers than by museums, theaters, and other institutions devoted solely to the arts.

In discussions with 153 staff and young people involved in arts programs, researchers often found a striking depth of experience. Children and adults spoke of how participants gain not only skills in ballet, music, computer graphics, theater, and painting, among other art forms, but also a means to understand who they are as individuals or in relation to others; to appreciate the sounds, images, motions, and values of their cultural heritage; to enjoy their own creative expressions; to envision a future and cultivate the discipline and organization to get there; and to experience warmth, support, and challenge from other kids and adults. Informants spoke about these and many other benefits that some said school experiences do not or cannot foster.

Researchers also found that young people participated in arts programs more often for internally motivated reasons (their interest in learning art, being with friends, having fun) than for externally motivated reasons (pressure from parents or other adults in their lives.) And while their interest in these programs was strong, their ability to physically reach them was often limited. Distance and safety issues impeded many kids’ attendance. Other findings included that support from parents was vital to kids’ attendance and that organizational operations and the strength and existence of arts programs often hinged on the diverse talents and energies of one or two staff members.

**Amelia Kohm  
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*with assistance from  
Adrienne Falcón and  
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# CHAPIN HALL CENTER FOR CHILDREN

The Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago was established in 1985 as a research and development center dedicated to bringing sound information, rigorous analyses, innovative ideas, and an independent perspective to the ongoing public debate about the needs of children and the ways in which those needs can best be met.

The Center focuses its work on all children, while devoting special attention to children facing special risks or challenges, such as poverty, abuse and neglect, and mental and physical illness. The contexts in which children are supported—primarily their families and communities—are of particular interest.

Chapin Hall's work is shaped by a dual commitment to the worlds of research and policy. This requires that our work meet both the exacting standards of university research and the practical needs of policy and program development, and that we work to advance knowledge and to disseminate it.

Chapin Hall is committed to diversity not only of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and physical ability but also of experience, discipline, and viewpoint.

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- Children's services, covering the problems that threaten children and the services designed to address them, including child welfare, mental health, and the juvenile court
- Primary supports, concerning the resources in communities that enhance the development and well-being of all children, but may be especially important to children who are poor or otherwise disadvantaged
- Community building, focusing on the development, documentation, and evaluation of community-building initiatives designed to make communities more supportive of children and families
- Schools' connections with children's services, primary supports, and communities, examining the range of institutions that foster children's learning and development, including not only schools but also families, businesses, services, communities, and the relationships, actual and potential, among them
- International projects, covering Chapin Hall's recent and growing involvement with children's policy researchers and research centers in other countries
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# Arts Opportunities for Young People in Chicago

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Amelia Kohm  
Joan Costello  
Jennifer Fenton

*Art is the soul of life. Art feeds what nothing else feeds. It is not left brain or right brain. It is heat, soul, anima. A child well nourished in the arts lives a richer life.*

Larry Long, artistic director,  
Ruth Page Foundation School

*It's like when you eat a peppermint, I can't explain it. It's just like that, it's free.*

Eleven year-old girl in the  
South Side YMCA ballet program

## Introduction

On any weekday afternoon, young people across Chicago are engaged in the arts—a Cambodian dance class in a small apartment on the city's north side, a bomba class for first- and second-generation Puerto Rican young people, a high-tech video production program on the West Side, an arts and crafts program in a public park on the Southwest Side, a downtown school of classical ballet for children from around the city and suburbs, and neighborhood branches of a city-wide children's choir serving young people of all races, ethnicities, and incomes.

Art programs—as well as other organized activities like sports leagues, tutoring programs, and scouting troops—are gaining increasing attention as the nation becomes more concerned about keeping young people off the streets after school. Besides providing a safe place, what do these activities offer young people? And are there enough of these programs available and accessible to young people?

A decade ago, Chapin Hall began to explore the value of community resources that

provide broad support for children and families—what we call *primary supports*. At that time, the child policy and the social service fields focused almost exclusively on finding solutions to teen parenting, gang violence, substance abuse, and other problems facing young people. There was little consideration of how an increased focus on *primary care* for all children in addition to *specialized care* for those with specific problems might strengthen the entire social service sector (Wynn, Costello, Halpern, Richman 1994).

Chapin Hall's working definition of primary supports includes organized activities, facilities, and events that offer constructive experiences for children and youth rather than focusing solely on the prevention or amelioration of problems. Voluntarily selected by families and young people, primary supports include, but are not limited to, experiences that may promote positive development, teach skills, or provide safe environments during non-school time. Such diverse resources as arts programs, sports leagues, parks, and museums all fall within the broad boundaries of primary supports. Primary supports can be viewed as the foundation of the social service system, the basic level of organized social resources for families.

Through our research, we are gaining an understanding of the prevalence, operation, and value of primary supports, which are often thought to be simply recreational. We hope that such an understanding helps policy makers, funders, agency directors, and others concerned about young people to promote and strengthen primary supports that already exist for children and consider

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*I really almost hate the words “at-risk” because with the way it's being defined now everyone's at risk. You and I are at risk now for sitting in this corner storefront. I don't know, the young people who come in they're just, I don't know, they're young people from the neighborhood.*

Paul Terruel  
co-director,  
Street Level Youth Media

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## Acknowledgments

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*(Other parks) look at us and they say “you’ve got teenagers going to drama?” And they just look at us like “are you lying to us?” I mean you go around to these parks and you tell me what park has 600 to 700 young people coming, 500 alone in the morning.*

Kevin Udrow, supervisor,  
Shabbona Park

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how the current social service system might be restructured to focus not only on the improvement of problem-focused services, but also on a foundation of primary supports.

In addition to Chapin Hall’s work, a growing body of literature is focusing on programs that seek to promote positive development rather than ameliorate problems. Brice-Heath and McLaughlin (1991), for example, have found that such activities help young participants to develop self-confidence, problem-solving capabilities, and other life skills that are critical to fulfilling and productive futures. They also found that arts activities appear to be particularly effective in fostering such skills. Findings such as these have confirmed our belief that arts programs are an important category of primary supports.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

This paper reports the findings from a descriptive study of arts programs for young people in the city of Chicago. The study had two parts. The first was a survey of the scope, variety, and sponsorship of arts activities for children. The second part involved eighteen case studies intended to provide information about the purposes and anticipated benefits of arts programs from the points of view of staff, participants, and independent observers.

Our study of arts programs for children and youth in Chicago had three primary goals:

- To examine the scope and character of arts opportunities for young people in Chicago because, although arts programs appear to be in demand, little is known about their prevalence, range of sponsorship, goals, or participants’ motivations and characteristics.
- To share the information we gathered with directors, staff, and funders of arts programs for young people so that they can consider the implications of the findings for their programs. Many arts program staff work in isolation, without the benefit of conferences, publications, professional associations, and other efforts that can increase the flow of information and lead to innovation and improvement across the sector.

- To explore a strategy of investigation for other categories of primary supports because it is difficult to study the ways in which cumulative involvement in primary supports contribute to children’s and families’ lives without knowing more about their scope and operations.

### **Overview of the Report**

The report begins with a brief review of prior research related to arts programs for young people. A methodology section is followed by a summary of the findings from each part of the study: the citywide survey and the eighteen case studies of programs that represent the diversity of arts programs for young people in Chicago. We end with a brief discussion of the study’s policy, program, and research implications.

### **Review of Prior Arts Programming Research**

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the value of programs that focus on promoting the positive development of young people. Although the research in this area has not caught up with some practitioners’ and policy makers’ claims about the value of such an orientation, a body of literature on the subject is emerging.<sup>1</sup>

Still generally missing from the literature, however, are examinations of arts programs specifically. What research has been conducted is mainly focused on programs considered to be exemplary or those that target young people from poor communities. Although these efforts provide important insight into the value of certain programs for certain participants, they do not illuminate the full scope of arts programming for young people. We have not found any other efforts to survey a broad range of arts programs for young people within a city.

Brice-Heath and Soep have conducted the most extensive research on arts programs for young people. This work grew from Brice-Heath and McLaughlin’s (1991) national study of after-school programs that attract young people’s sustained and voluntary participation. To understand how such programs function and benefit young peo-

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<sup>1</sup> For a review of literature in this area, see *Beyond Home and School: The Role of Primary Supports in Youth Development* (1998) by Sheila Merry.

ple, they conducted in-depth case studies of programs in metropolitan areas, mid-sized towns, and rural counties. Policy makers, educators, and young people from local neighborhoods nominated programs they considered effective. Approximately 120 organizations were studied. Drawing on national survey findings such as those from the *National Education Longitudinal Study*, they also gathered data concerning the out-of-school activities of approximately 30,000 young people, and more extensive information on 600 youth, including individual studies of sixty youth across a range of sites.

After seven years of research on these varied programs, Brice-Heath and McLaughlin found that most of the programs nominated had three crucial elements: rules, roles, and risks. Rules provide young people with a physically safe environment in which program leaders offer them “tough love.” Equally important, in their analysis, is the opportunity for each kid to take on varied and numerous roles within the organization, including leader and follower. When young people work with staff in decision-making, planning, implementation, and evaluation, and with each other, they learn to consider their present actions and the end result of a project simultaneously. Performing multiple roles and working toward an end product (a game, a performance, or a community event) also involves the risk of being harshly judged by outside critics. Yet, it is in part the desire to produce something worthy of praise from authentic critics that draws many young people to exemplary after-school programs.

Among the varied programs in the study, Brice-Heath and McLaughlin found that arts activities emerged as particularly effective. Young people involved in arts were more likely than youth in athletic or community service programs to win academic honors and involve themselves in honors clubs, to foresee themselves graduating from high school and attending college, to feel good about themselves, to read for pleasure, and to view themselves as problem solvers, among other benefits.

Based on these findings, Brice-Heath and Soep decided to focus their attention on

the arts to gain a clearer understanding of how artistic processes within programs bring about added benefits. They discovered that many of the features present in programs nominated as effective in athletics, academics, service, and arts are more concentrated in arts programs. Brice-Heath and Soep (1996) found more flexibility and room for imagination within the framework of aesthetic considerations than in athletics or service programs. Also of note in effective programs in underserved and impoverished inner-city areas was a certain “family” feel that arose from young people and staff getting to know each other through regular attendance over long periods of time, communication about arts activities, as well as by going through certain program cycles together, such as the wind-up and down between performances and special events.

In a 1996 study of how the arts help children and youth “at-risk,” the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities found principles and practices of effective programs that are similar to those noted by Brice-Heath, Soep, and McLaughlin. The study identified 600 programs across the country that work primarily with at-risk children from which 218 were selected and profiled for their outstanding efforts in youth development through the arts and humanities.<sup>2</sup> The study report, *Coming Up Taller: Arts and Humanities Programs for Children and Youth At Risk* (1996) highlights benefits of arts programs, such as providing young people with safe places to spend free time, new skills and perspectives, a sense of self-worth and achievement, and the opportunity to form close relationships with adults.

Korn (1992) examined the state of arts education in Chicago Public Schools. He found that arts organizations that offer after-school programs had become significant providers of all arts training for children because of reduced arts programs in school curricula. In his report, Korn recommended that arts providers and schools come together to offer young people culturally diverse, multidiscipline arts experiences as an instrument of curriculum integration and reform.

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*. . . you can send a message through art. Your feelings, your opinions, the things you like, you know. . . . to understand a person, you got to know how they feel. . . words are not . . . strong—maybe they’re not strong enough to describe your feelings, the way that you think. Your drawings are strong enough.*

Participant in the MCA computer graphics program

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<sup>2</sup> Programs were nominated by various organizations such as humanities councils, the American Association of Museums, Project Co-Arts, the United States Conference of Mayors, and the National Recreation and Parks Association.

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*Pom Pom dance runs pretty much year round, although we've been criticized for that a lot. . . [Funders] say it's a waste of funds, and that if we run it in ten-week sections and have the performance at the end, then be off for six weeks and start all over again, we'll save money. But our experience, even though we try to be as flexible as we can, is that youngsters want a place to come and be and be identified with, "I'm on the dance team. I'm a UGGP [U Go Girl Posse] member," that's what they call themselves . . . So, we feel there's a value in having them continue year round.*

Betty Brown, director of social work services, Abraham Lincoln Centre

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Another body of research related to children and the arts involves attempts to link participation in art programs, both in and out of school, to achievement in math, science, reading comprehension, and general cognitive development. The Dallas Partnership for Arts and Culture in Education, Association for the Advancement of Arts Education in Cincinnati, New York City Alliance for the Arts, and others have pursued such studies. Psychologists, education professionals, neuroscientists and others in this growing field of inquiry have identified multiple links between the arts and cognition. Rauscher (1993) and others at the University of California at Irvine have shown positive effects of music training on spatial-temporal reasoning. Gardner (1993) has stressed the importance of arts experiences in his theory of "multiple intelligences" in which he emphasizes that while most of our educational systems only emphasize verbal and mathematical skills, musical and spatial capacities, among others, are equally important.

Catterall (1997) found that, during the eighth and tenth grades, students who engaged systematically in arts-rich activities out-performed students with low arts involvement on academic grades, standardized test scores for reading, and attitudes concerning commitment to community. Moreover, he found that students from the lowest quartile of the family income and parent education distribution significantly out-performed their peers with low arts involvement, along with the students whose parents have a higher socioeconomic status.

Approaching the issue from a different perspective, DiMaggio (1985) used data from surveys of 1,427 male and 1,479 female eleventh graders in 1960, whom Project Talent resurveyed in 1971. Respondents were asked about their knowledge of and participation in traditionally defined "high culture" activities. DiMaggio found that those students who rated high in "cultural capital" showed significantly higher rates of educational attainment, college attendance, college completion, and graduate education.

Some have questioned attempts to justify the arts by way of academic achievement, a position they view as potentially reducing aesthetic experience to a utilitarian equation. According to Davis (1996), the

process of experiencing and understanding one's humanity takes place through the arts, and is at least as important to education as math, reading, or science. A recent report by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Persky, Sandene, and Askew, 1998) also acknowledges this perspective in its assessment of eighth graders' knowledge of arts. The authors claim that, "The arts have a unique capacity to integrate intellect, emotions, and physical skills in the creation of meaning."

Studies that attempt to link the arts to academic performance have been criticized on methodological grounds as well. Eisner's (1998) general critique of these studies is that they claim far more than is actually shown in the data. He notes that correlations rarely show why such relationships exist. For example, he points to a study that claims to demonstrate that "students who studied the arts more than 4 years were 59 points higher on the verbal and 44 points higher on math portion of the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) than students with no course work or experience in the arts." Eisner questions the relationship between these facts because students who have studied arts for more than 4 years may not have the same academic background as those who have not studied arts. He maintains that most of the studies he has reviewed fail to employ basic research standards and rely on patterns of association or anecdotal reports to make the case that arts involvement effects academic achievement.

Drawing on research—such as the studies described above—and anecdotal experience, numerous how-to guides have been developed to inform arts organizations and teachers who provide ongoing instruction in the arts. Guides have been developed by The National Arts Education Association (1995), and the National Arts Education Research Center (1992), among many others. Some have looked closely at best practices gathered from local arts organizations. Researchers at Harvard University, for example, studied 316 community arts centers to create the *Harvard Co-Arts Assessment Handbook* (1993), an assessment tool for those who teach arts to children, youth, and adults in disadvantaged neighborhoods. In Chicago, Duncan (1998) recently outlined the exem-



plary efforts of eleven organizations that provide arts programming to children and youth.

Finally, a few researchers have attempted to assemble information on the supply and use of arts resources. RMC Research Corporation (1997), at the request of the Urban Institute, conducted a study with the goal of describing the general state of arts and culture data being gathered around the country, and to uncover the ways in which arts and culture data could be used to build community arts and culture indicators. Through a survey of mostly mainstream arts and culture institutions, RMC discovered that many agencies and organizations at all levels collect similar types of data, but that “there is a relatively limited history of analysis and utilization of data for decision making purposes.” In fact, most organizations gathered data to respond to the requirements of funding agencies. They found little baseline data or readily available comparable data that could help establish indicators of the state of arts and culture activities in communities.

In another attempt to quantify the state of the arts around the country, The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) (1992) conducted a random phone survey of individuals living in twelve communities across the United States to assess adults’ participation patterns and availability of local arts programs and facilities. The survey focused on eight “core disciplines” (jazz, classical music, opera, musicals, plays, ballet, other dance, art museum/gallery), and four other arts experiences (arts/crafts fair or festival, movie theater, historic park/monument, reading books for pleasure). Metropolitan Chicago was one of the communities assessed and rated “nearly average compared to the twelve sites studied” for the core disciplines, but second-highest for musical attendance (32 percent), and tied for eleven out of the twelve for ballet attendance. The report states that measuring Chicago area arts activities in quantitative terms is nearly impossible, barring an unprecedented research effort. Like the RMC researchers, the NEA authors concluded that there is a “lack of systematic data collection at the local level, the

amount and quality of information relating to the supply of arts facilities and programs varies from site to site.”

With the findings and challenges of prior studies in mind, we set out to learn more about arts programming for young people in Chicago.

## Methodology

The study was conducted in two parts: a broad survey of public and nonprofit non-school arts programs for young people citywide and eighteen case studies of organizations that offer arts programs for children in Chicago.

### Part I. Citywide Survey

The purpose of the citywide survey was to describe, as fully as possible, the universe of nonprofit and public sector arts opportunities that occur during non-school hours for young people aged 5 to 18 in Chicago. We wanted to explore the extent to which published lists, informants, and telephone surveys could provide descriptive data about the universe of a single category of primary supports programs. The study surveyed visual, performing, and literary arts including: drawing, painting, ceramics, sculpture, graphics, printing, photography, jewelry, computer animation, video, dance, drama, instrumental and vocal music, musical theatre, performance art, and creative writing. Not included were for-profit programs or lessons, programs in which young people were only the audience or viewers rather than participants, arts activities in schools or in faith-based programs, art therapy programs, and programs in specialized service settings such as detention centers.<sup>3</sup>

To identify as many organizations as possible that may offer arts programming for children in Chicago, we drew on the following sources of information in 1997:

- Directories published by the Chicago Public Library and the Chicago Park District, Chicago Cultural Center, local aldermen, and service providers in various districts

<sup>3</sup> We also did not examine Gallery 37, a city-sponsored job training program in the arts that in 1999 employed over 4,000 adolescents in Chicago in a downtown summer program and year-round programs in schools, parks, and community-based organizations. We were negotiating for a separate study of this program at the time of this project. Unfortunately, the Gallery 37 study did not materialize, and we regret its omission from this study.

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*The music is just the tool that we use to make the experience. We could start a youth group, but there is nothing that unifies that except that it's a place to come. But working on something together gives everyone a reason to be there and music is a wonderful tool and a wonderful aesthetic goal. It has other emotional benefits for the young people. It gives them an outlet to express anger and happiness and sadness, especially if they don't have a support system at home.*

*I think that's what drives us.*

Christina Stockwell, neighborhood choir coordinator, Chicago Children's Choir

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- Arts program guides published by the Chicago Cultural Center, the Illinois Association of Art Education, and the Chicago Dance Directory.
- Lists from the Illinois Arts Council, Arts Bridge, and the United Way's Human Services Directory
- Staff at arts organizations, human service organizations, and foundations
- Spotlight on Chicago, an arts fair at the Chicago Cultural Center at which 100 cultural organizations distributed literature about their programs for young people
- The Internet

From these sources, we identified 789 organizations that potentially offered arts programs for young people. Through a brief initial telephone survey and review of public park and library data, we confirmed that 498 *did* offer arts programs for young people (211 private nonprofit organizations, 208 Park District locations and 79 libraries).

We then began telephone surveys with the 211 private nonprofit organizations on the list. Telephone contact was attempted repeatedly, although not always successfully. Information was collected from 157, but we were unable to make contact with the 54 remaining organizations. Interviews focused on the kinds of arts programming offered by each organization, when and where programs were offered during the year of the survey, and the number and characteristics of young people who participate. When possible, we also gathered information on the budget and income sources of the organization. However, interviewees were often unable to supply all of the information requested, which left us with a considerable amount of missing data. Many informants reported that their organizations collect very limited data.

Rather than survey each park and library in the city, we relied on information provided by the central offices of the Chicago Public Library and the Chicago Park District. In an interview with the Chicago Public Library's Children's Services Coordinator, we learned that most children's librarians make arts and crafts activities a regular part of their services for children and young adults, although few offer regular art classes. Because programs

are sporadic, the Chicago Public Library does not keep records of arts activities in the libraries. We gathered basic data on the location of the seventy-five branch libraries, two regional libraries, and the main children's room located at the central library downtown. We also reviewed the Chicago Park District Fall 1997 program schedules to gather information on each of the parks that offer arts programs including the type of facility, the types of arts programs offered, and the frequency of classes/workshops. The data were collected from the summer of 1997 to the spring of 1998.

## Part II. Case Studies

From the 498 identified organizations that offer arts activities for children, we chose a sample of eighteen programs to represent the diversity of type, size, location, and ethnic focus of the sponsoring organization, and kinds of art programs offered. We included only programs that had been in existence for at least 2 years. We did not focus exclusively on organizations or programs that had been identified to us as of superior quality.

At each selected organization, we examined one art program that included regular classes, rehearsals, or meetings of young people between the ages of 8 and 20 (most were between 10 and 18 years). We interviewed one agency director, site manager, or department head and one staff member who worked directly with young people at each of the organizations. We asked about the mission, philosophy, goals, strategies, benefits, challenges, and administration of each art programs. We also observed the selected programs in action to provide an independent view of the programs, participant involvement, and the nature of the relationships among staff and young people. Additionally, we conducted focus groups with young people about their experiences—why they come, what they like, what they do not like, what the experience means to them. Focus group participants also completed a written questionnaire about their program experiences and their general interest in the arts.

The three "views" of programs—staff, young participants, and Chapin Hall observers—were intended to clarify the purposes and anticipated benefits of arts programs, and to identify issues around which

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*I think what really separates our program from others that may be parallel to it, is the fact that we don't target the cream of the crop. We don't require that our students be A or B students. That's not a requirement. Nor do we require that they have an extensive arts background before they are admitted.*

Milton Rodriguez Yollocalli,  
museum director,  
the Mexican Fine Arts  
Center Museum

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perspectives converged or diverged. Time and resources did not permit inclusion of parents whose roles as instigators, facilitators, assistants, and fundraisers for these programs seemed very important. Their perspectives would have enriched our understanding.

### Citywide Survey

Despite limitations noted in the methodology section, the survey offers more extensive information about arts opportunities for young people in out-of-school settings and hours in Chicago than previously available.

### Overall Findings

**Number and location.** We found 498 organizations in Chicago that offer arts programs for young people during their out-of-school time including 208 public parks, 79 public libraries, and 211 private nonprofit organizations (see Figure 1). These resources were not evenly distributed throughout the city. In some neighborhoods, only parks and libraries offered occasional arts activities; in other areas, a wide range of organizations provided a rich array of arts programs for young people. As one interviewee put it, “in some of the neighborhoods the young people have to make choices, but in others, we’re it.”

The maps on pages 8, 10, and 11 display the distribution of arts programs in Chicago. Parks, libraries, recreational, and social service organizations offering arts programs for young people are distributed fairly evenly throughout the city with some clustering in the downtown and northeastern (higher-income) parts of the city. By contrast, arts and cultural organizations are almost exclusively along the lakefront with the majority being in the downtown and northeast parts of the city.

**Auspices.** The vast majority of arts opportunities for children in Chicago were offered by non-arts organizations. Of the 498 organizations in the sample, 404 were parks, libraries, social service agencies, recreation centers, or education-oriented organizations. The remaining 94 institutions described themselves as arts organizations, mixed arts and education organizations, or cultural organizations. Although we did not collect information on the extent to which non-arts organizations form partnerships with arts organizations, anecdotal evidence shows that many arts organizations reach out to young

people in their own communities through such collaborations.

**Types of art programs offered.** The most common forms of art offered by the 498 organizations reviewed were crafts and dance. Over 50 percent offered crafts (two-thirds of which were parks) and almost 40 percent offered dance. Only 10 to 20 percent indicated that they offered drawing, painting, instrumental music, vocal music, mixed media arts and/or drama. The least common art forms, offered by 10 percent or less of the organizations, were creative writing, mixed-media in the visual arts, graphics/printing, sculpture, poetry, video, photography, ceramics, design-jewelry, or architecture, computer graphics/design, play writing, mixed media-performing or media arts, musical theater, computer animation, electronic arts (sound editing, etc.), or book/ papermaking.

#### Private nonprofit organizations

We collected more detailed information from private nonprofit organizations through phone interviews with directors, managers, or administrators at each organization.

**Location.** Most of the nonprofit arts programs were housed in community centers, commercial buildings, youth centers, private schools, cultural centers, and museums. Other facilities reported were: theaters, parks, galleries, religious institutions, studios, libraries, public schools, and music halls.

**Organization Age.** Thirty-seven percent of the nonprofit organizations were established in the last 20 years, slightly more than were established between 1900 and 1978. Approximately 13 percent were established before 1900. There may have been absolute growth in the number of organizations that offer arts programs, but because there are no data on the number of organizations that either canceled arts programs for young people or ceased operations altogether, we cannot be certain.

**Affiliation.** Twenty-five percent indicated that they were part of a larger organization or network such as Boys and Girls Clubs, Chicago Commons, Chicago Youth Centers, YMCA, or Hull House Association.

**Ethnic Focus.** Twenty-six percent of the nonprofit organizations indicated that they have an organization-wide ethnic or racial focus, the most common being African American, Latino, and multicultural. How-

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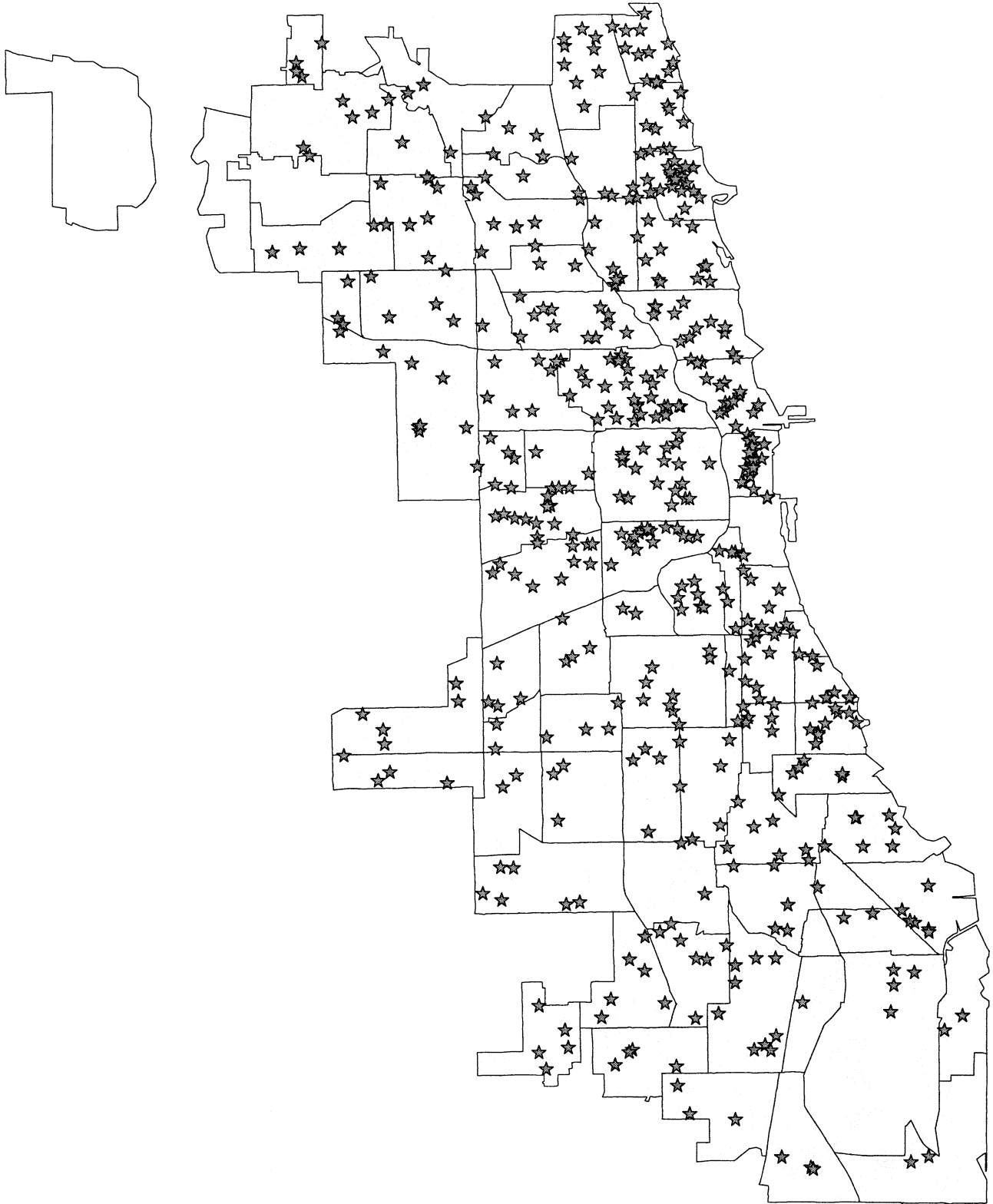
*The most important role Casa Aztlan is playing right now is bringing together immigrants and third and fourth generation Mexicans here. . . . Stereotypes are established through TV and the media. There was a division that was being set up, and that’s a struggle where outside influences have found it really easy to come in and divide us.*

Longinos Flores, youth program coordinator, Casa Aztlan

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**Figure 1**

Arts Programs for Young People in Chicago, 1997–1998



ever, thirty-six of the organizations surveyed indicated that they offer programs focused on ethnic or racial art forms. Seventy-five percent offered experiences with African American art forms and 53 percent with Latino art forms. Experiences with Asian, Native American, European/Anglo, or multicultural art forms were much less common and Arab, East Asian, and Eastern European art forms were quite rare.

**Size.** Fifty-two percent of nonprofit organizations reported that they serve 100 young people or less overall (not just in arts programs). Only 22 percent serve 500 or more.

**Fees.** Sixty-two percent of the organizations indicated that they charge a fee for their arts programs. However, many of the fees were nominal, such as registration fees of \$10 or less, and almost half offer scholarships. Thirty-eight percent offer programs free of charge.

**Goals.** When asked to describe their goals, about half of interviewees spoke of exposing young people to art forms and/or teaching them specific art skills. Other frequently given answers included providing life skills through learning the arts, building ethnic or cultural pride, providing young people with a means of expression, promoting overall youth development, supplying the training young people need to pursue professional careers in the arts, and providing a safe place for young people to be during out-of-school time.

**Funding and program information.** Sixty percent of interviewees did not have sufficient information to answer questions about their finances (budget size, funding source, and percent spent on arts), frequency of programming, and ages and races of participants.

## Case Studies

### Overview of the Sample Organizations

In our sample of eighteen organizations, we looked at dance, drama, music (both instrumental and vocal), arts and crafts, video/computer, drawing, painting, and printmaking programs offered by ten arts organizations and eight non-arts organizations such as a YMCA, four social service agencies, and three park district sites. Three of the organizations were on the north side of the

city, three were downtown, five were on the west-side, and seven were on the South Side. Nine of the organizations served their surrounding communities primarily and nine had a citywide focus.

Seven organizations had annual budgets of less than \$300,000, three between \$300,000 and \$1 million, and six over \$1 million. We were unable to collect budget information from two organizations. Fourteen of the organizations focused primarily on children and youth, and when asked to estimate the number of young people who participated in their various programs over the course of a year, answers ranged from 45 to more than 20,000, in part because organizations do not count participants in the same way. Some count only those who are regularly enrolled in their programs while others include young people who may have a single contact as participants or audience. Organizations may also count differently in different years so the matter of how many young people they reach and at what level of involvement cannot be resolved easily without observations onsite over time.

We met with 117 young people in focus groups. They ranged in age from 8 to 20 years with most in the 10-to-15-year range. Seventy percent were girls. Twenty-six percent were African American; 21 percent were Latino/Latina, 18 percent were of mixed racial background, 14 percent were Caucasian, 13 percent were Asian, 4 percent were other, and 5 percent did not indicate a race or ethnic group. Two-thirds had participated in the arts programs under investigation for 2 years or less.

### Key Findings

- Non-arts Organizations Have an Important Role in Providing Arts Experiences to Young People

The findings from the citywide survey indicated that non-arts organizations are the primary providers of arts programming for youth in Chicago. Through the case studies we learned that many non-arts organizations are not just offering standard arts and crafts classes. We often found programs with dedicated artists as instructors providing a range of arts experiences aimed at fostering not only appreciation and aptitude in various art

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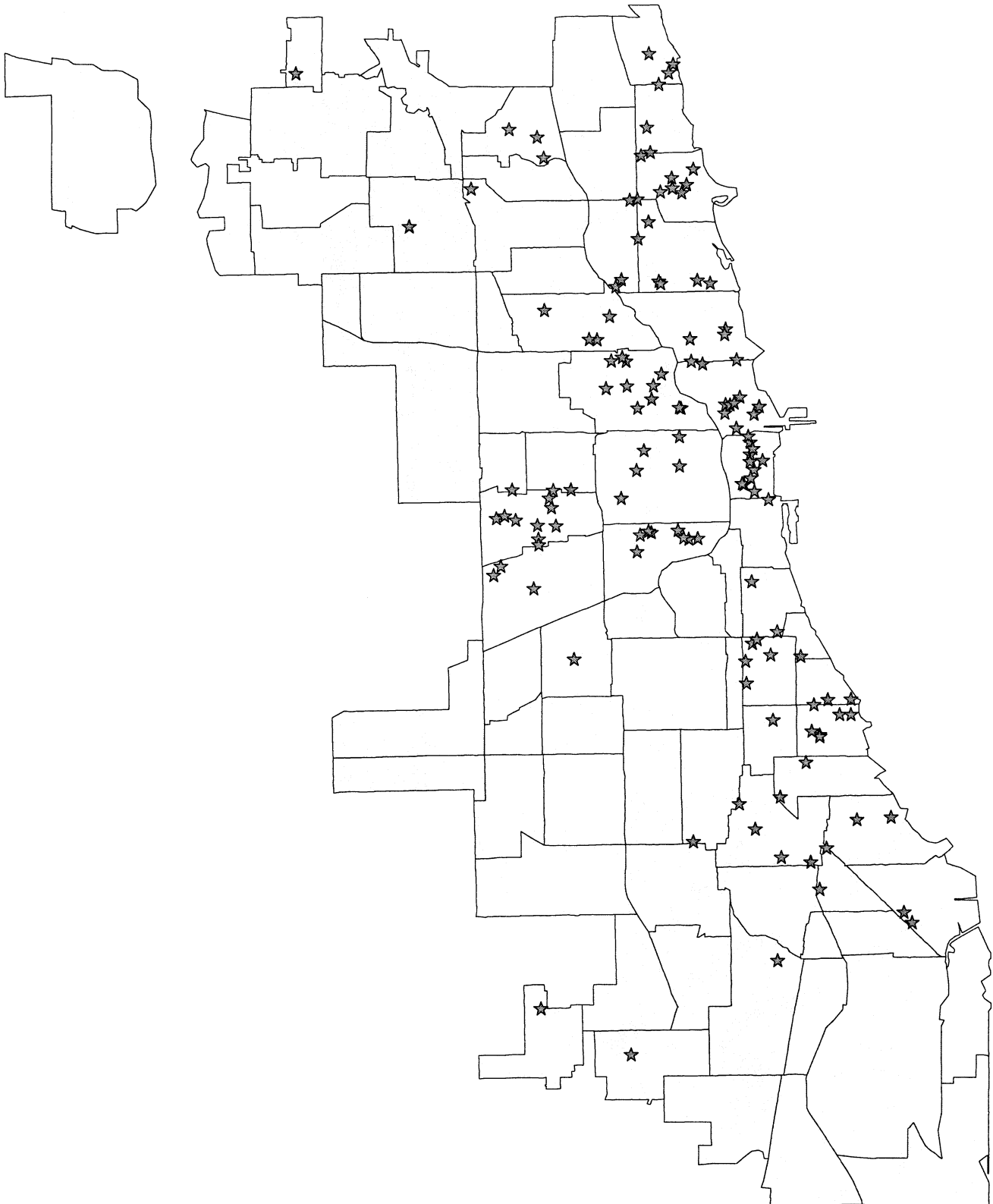
*We want them to push themselves. They have to achieve their goals on their own. We provide everything for them, but they have to do it. The effort has to be there... At the end of the session we take a look at the work that we have produced, and we may have a critique of some sort. Then at the end we go over what were the goals, have they been met, and if not, what could have been changed to meet them, or could the goals have been higher.*

Jeff Abbey Maldonado,  
instructor, Yollocalli Youth  
Museum of the Mexican Fine  
Arts Center Museum

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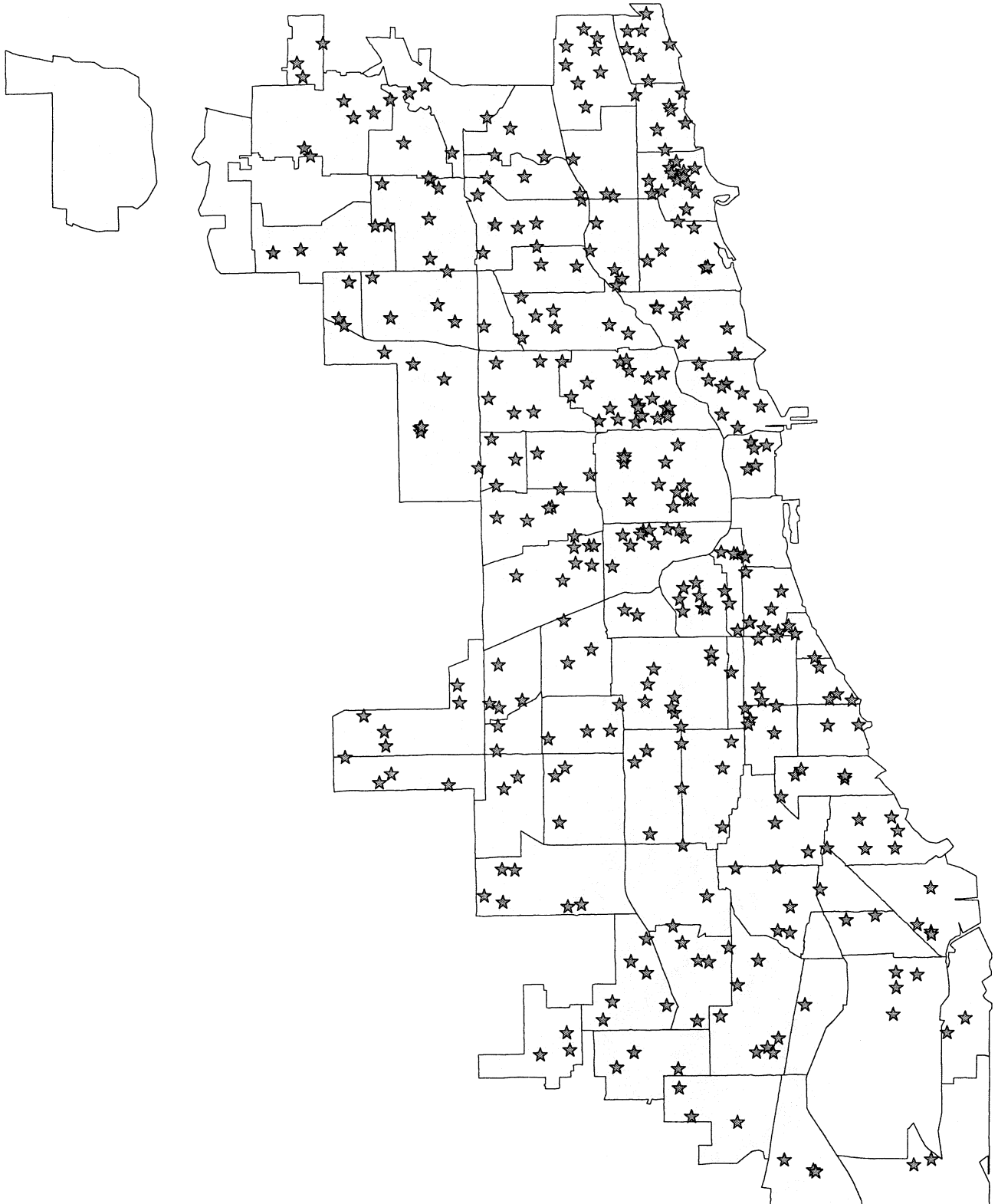
**Figure 2**

Arts Programs for Young People in Chicago,  
Arts and Cultural Organizations, 1997–1998



**Figure 3**

Arts Programs for Young People in Chicago  
Non-Arts Organizations (Parks, Libraries, Recreational, and Social Service Organizations),  
1997–1998



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*For the Cambodians in Chicago, their only hope or chance of survival is to involve people in preserving their culture as part of the development of every child. Being a Cambodian, it is nice to know one can do Cambodian things and feel proud of being Cambodian.*

Sen Che, dance instructor,  
Heartland Alliance

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forms but also critical life skills and developmental competencies such as self-expression, goal setting, social skills, and self-esteem.<sup>4</sup>

It also appears that arts experiences in non-arts organizations provide important gateways to other arts experiences. Performances, field trips, collaborations with other organizations, and conversations with staff members expand young people's worlds. They learn about opportunities available at other organizations, how to pursue careers in the arts, and how to increase their arts experiences through trips to museums, theaters, musical performances, etc.

Yet, despite the importance of the programs they offer, non-arts organizations often find it very difficult to raise funds for their arts programs. Indeed, most of the directors of such organizations noted that although there was no shortage of demand for their programs, they had trouble maintaining or expanding programs due to lack of resources. On the other hand, the director of education at a downtown museum indicated that it was not difficult for the museum to raise funds for arts classes but that, for a variety of reasons, they often had trouble attracting kids to their free programs. Young people told us that it often takes a lot of time, bus fare, determination, and parental support to reach programs in other neighborhoods. Directors of non-arts organizations felt that foundations and other funders were mainly interested in supporting well-known arts organizations like museums and theaters.

- Young People Report Significant Benefits

**Young people attend arts programs for internally-motivated reasons.** Although many of the directors and staff thought that most of the participants in their programs were strongly encouraged to attend by their parents or other care givers, most of the young people we spoke with emphasized their interest in learning something new, in being with their friends from school or making new friends, in becoming accomplished in a particular art form, or simply "getting out of the house" to a comfortable, supportive, and safe place. Our observations tended to confirm

these reports as young people seemed highly engaged with their arts activities.

**The benefits of programs appear to be both broad and deep.** The eighteen programs claimed to offer a wide range of benefits with greatest emphasis on life skills and developmental capacities. Staff and young people also spoke about cultivating complex art skills; finding adult and peer support not available at school or home; developing organization skills; obtaining new understandings of other cultures, perspectives, and themselves; and experiencing true joy. During our observations and focus groups, young people were eager to discuss the value of the programs.

**Experiences in arts programs offer important complements, supplements, or sometimes correctives to school experience.** Young people, especially teens, often told us that they felt lost when at school, that no one really knows them there. They also spoke of the pressure to conform. By contrast, many described feeling supported and recognized as individuals in art programs, many of which are smaller than schools. They pointed to close relationships with staff members and a culture of acceptance among staff and participants. They spoke of feeling comfortable taking risks and expressing themselves. Young people in some of the programs said that they were more challenged in their art programs than in school. Those who participated in groups that performed or displayed their work in front of "real" audiences (rather than parents and classmates) particularly emphasized the contrasts between the challenges presented by the arts program and those available in school. Staff endorsed their views, and observers noted a high degree of respectful enjoyment among staff and young people.

- Transportation is a Barrier to Participation

**Transportation is a big challenge for many young people.** When speaking with participants and staff at programs that attract young people from across the city, we heard of participants who spend an hour or more, sometimes using multiple modes of public transportation, to travel to and from a pro-

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<sup>4</sup> In a city that is home to many artists, Chicago organizations may be able to hire more artists to staff programs than might occur elsewhere.



**Figure 4**

**Eighteen Case Study Organizations and Staff Interviewed**

**Abraham Lincoln Centre**  
 Jesse Madison  
 Betty Brown and Ursula Elbert

**Anchor Graphics**  
 David Jones  
 Ian Weaver

**Casa Aztlan**  
 Carlos Arango  
 Longinos Flores

**Chicago Children’s Choir**  
 Mary Carlson  
 Christina Stockwell

**Chinese American Service League**  
 How Yee Cheng  
 Samson Chua

**ETA Creative Arts Foundation**  
 Abena Joan Brown  
 Runako Jahi

**Free Street Programs**  
 David Schein  
 Ron Bieganski

**Gage Park**  
 Kevin O’Hara  
 Claudia Flaws

**Heartland Alliance**  
 Virginia Koch  
 Sen Che

**Mexican Fine Arts Center & Museum**  
 Milton Rodriguez  
 Lydia Guante and Jeff Abbey Maldonado

**Museum of Contemporary Art**  
 Wendy Woon  
 Stan Hughes

**People’s Music School**  
 Rita Simo  
 Judith Johnson-Brown

**Ruth Page Foundation School of Dance**  
 Shirley Burr  
 Larry Long

**Segundo Ruiz Belviz Cultural Center**  
 America Sorrentini  
 Piro Lopez

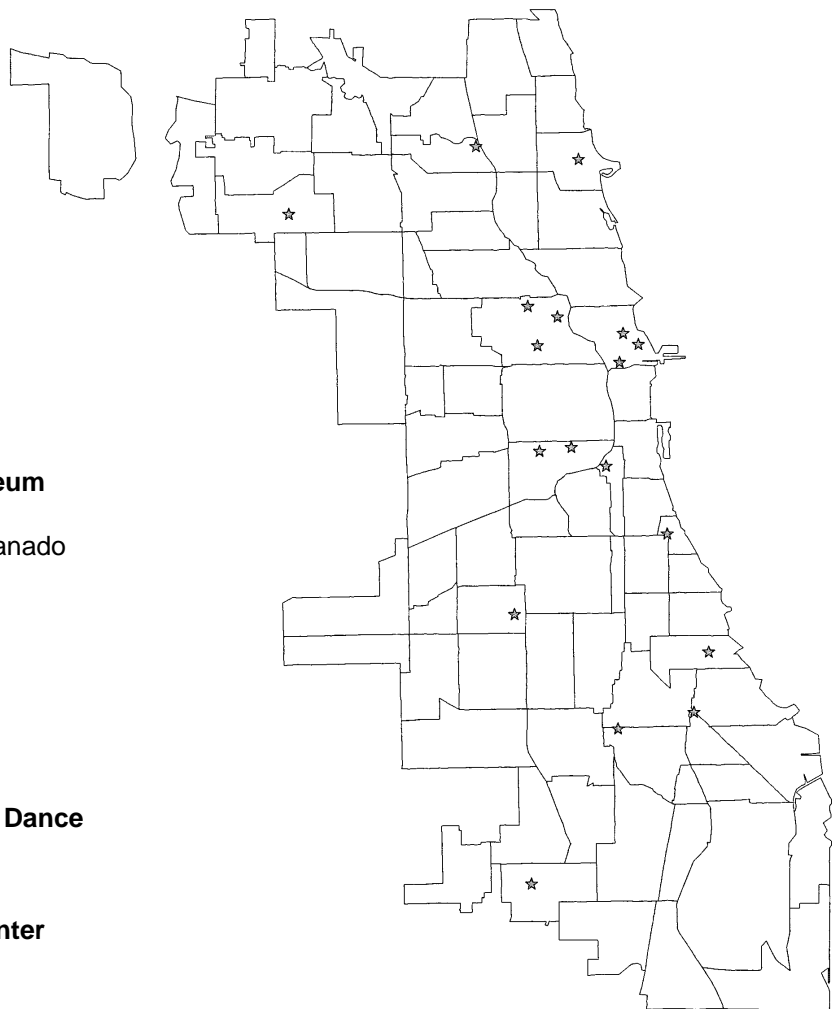
**Shabbona Park**  
 Kevin Udrow  
 Joe Savino

**South Side YMCA**  
 Harvey Johnson  
 Russell Talbert

**Street Level Youth Media**  
 Paul Teruel  
 Shalona Byrd

**West Chatham Park Cultural Center**  
 Ada Hinley  
 Vera McDonald

**Location of Eighteen Case Study Organizations**



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*We've always had a difficulty in being funded for the arts . . . we have encountered resistance from sectors of the philanthropic community in which they felt very uncomfortable with a community-based organization doing art . . . some really came out and told us like "shouldn't you be in the business of soup kitchens instead of the arts? It's such an extremely poor community and you people are talking about art." They didn't understand that creative expression is fundamental for the integration of any society, for a healthy society it's important.*

America Sorrentini, director,  
Segundo Ruiz Belvis  
Cultural Center

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gram. When asked why some of their friends did not participate, young people often said that, while their friends might share their interest in the arts, they were too lazy. Others told us that without transportation from their parents, their participation would be impossible. Even young people who lived near programs often spoke about the street dangers of traveling by themselves and felt reliant on parents and other adults to transport them. Programs in safe neighborhoods—such as those near busy intersections and near young people's homes—were most accessible. A couple of staff members felt that the presence of their programs and the traffic they created helped to increase the safety of the surrounding neighborhood.

- Staff Are the Backbone of Arts Programs

**Staff dedication to imparting the art form may be as important as their relationships with young people.** Staff characteristics varied considerably from one program to another. Some had warm, intense relationships with young people that reached into aspects of their lives beyond the program. Others were "all business." Participants in various programs appeared to admire staff with different styles as long as the instructors were competent and respected young people's abilities, their potential, and their individuality.

**The strength and very existence of arts programs often hinged on the talents of one or two staff members.** In about half the case studies, the arts program or the organization itself owed its existence to the talents, determination, and vision of one staff member. Because many of these programs operate on tight budgets and can only offer modest salaries, their most valuable resource often seemed to be the energy and skills of a creative individual. Without such key staff members, it would be difficult for some of the programs to thrive or even survive. One artistic director said that many programs are an illness away from closing, meaning that once a key staff person has an accident or an illness, he or she may need to find a job with better benefits.

- Parental Support Is Very Important

The diverse support of parents appeared vital to young people's attendance and to many organizations' operations. Parental

support included sewing costumes, carpooling children to and from programs, providing emotional support and encouragement, and fundraising. However, in a few of the programs with little to no parental involvement, young people participated only because of their own interest and determination. Indeed, staff at these programs spoke about providing support and encouragement that participants may not receive at home.

### **Organization and Program Characteristics**

We turn now to look closely at missions; participation, access, and eligibility; benefits to young people and communities; key program elements; and organizational and administrative strengths, challenges, and concerns. Our conclusions were drawn from interviews with staff, our own observations of the programs which generally confirmed what staff and young people told us, and focus groups and questionnaire data from young people in the programs.

#### *Organizational missions*

When speaking about their missions, the most common concerns expressed by directors and staff at all types of organizations was promoting participants' overall development, helping participants to help themselves, and giving them a means to strengthen their self-esteem and express their points of view. A few also spoke of providing a safe place for young people to be after school where they can have fun. "The arts programming is a way of reaching the children and the families," explained Virginia Koch at the Heartland Alliance, "We are not necessarily doing arts for art's sake at all. If something else worked and we had expertise in it, such as sports, we might use that."

Improving access to the arts for young people and exposing them to new art forms was the next most common mission. A few stressed the importance of providing arts education and equipment to disadvantaged populations. Mary Carlson, associate director of the Chicago Children's Choir echoed the comments of several other directors when she told us: "I would like to have the program available to any child in Chicago who wants it or needs it, and I would like it to be a good experience for any child no matter what level they are at."

A slightly smaller number focused their mission on helping young people to master a specific art skill, a goal not limited to arts organizations. Five directors mentioned providing professional-level training, sometimes solely for the value of the experience and sometimes as preparation for careers in the arts.

Other missions mentioned included responding to community interests and needs. The supervisors of all three of the public parks in our sample, as well as the director of the South Side YMCA, pointed to community requests as a primary reason for their developing art programs. Several other directors spoke about their role as a community gathering place. A few staff described the promotion of pride in and preservation of native cultures as a primary goal, and directors and staff of these groups were often quite passionate about filling what they perceived to be a critical gap in children's cultural education. Certain political or human rights agendas drove the work of other organizations. And three organizations saw one of their primary purposes as serving as a model of innovative programming for young people.

#### *Participation, access, and eligibility*

In our discussions with directors, staff, and participants, we explored who can participate, who actually does participate, who does not, and what aspects of programs foster or deter participation.

**Who CAN participate?** Most directors and staff stressed the fact that their doors were wide open to all who want to participate. Three made a point of saying that they were even open to gang members as long as they did not show their affiliations so that programs remained on neutral ground. Two other directors made a point of not targeting “at-risk” young people although many of their participants may qualify according to popular definitions. Of the organizations that do place restrictions on participation, most only had age requirements, and a few also had stipulations concerning artistic ability, school grades, ethnicity, and income level.

**Who DOES and DOES NOT participate?** Despite openness of many of the programs to all young people, each appears to attract certain types of participants. For example, many of the programs attracted participants primarily from their surround-

ing neighborhoods. Of the 117 young people surveyed, the vast majority lived near the program in which they were participating, and only six of the eighteen organizations drew half or less of their young people from the surrounding neighborhoods. Fourteen directors and staff also said that the majority of their participants represented a particular race or ethnic group. And a few of the organizations attracted more girls than boys to their arts programs.

Another common characteristic among participants in most of the programs, according to directors, staff, and young people, was that they often had parents—or other significant adults—encouraging, requiring, or supporting their involvement in the program. Most of the young people in the focus groups said their parents were “very involved” in their lives and 42 percent said that they had family members involved in the arts. Indeed, many of the directors and staff felt that participants first joined programs due to parental requirements. However, when asked who encourages them to be involved in the program: 77 percent of the young people surveyed said “I do” while only 55 percent mentioned parents or care givers. Additionally, a few programs aimed to provide the types of support young people may be missing from their caretakers. For example, one park supervisor felt that some participants get a sense of belonging and support that they are missing at home. A couple of programs appeared to be designed to directly attract young people and did not have much to do with their parents.

Young people involved in these art programs are often involved in other activities in and out of school. Fifty-nine percent of the young people surveyed said they were involved in other arts classes or programs, primarily those offered at school. Other typical participants mentioned by directors, staff, and young people at several organizations included those with family members who were involved in the program or organization, those with prior arts experience, those willing to devote lots of energy and time and to make sacrifices, and those who are serious about art or want to be artists. Two staff mentioned that participants were sometimes young people who did not fit in elsewhere and found a supportive place in the arts program.

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*I think that some community organizations need to realize that we are no longer in the phase where we don't know what the problem is. We know what the problems are, and we know what needs to be done. We need to give young people options. We can't just say, “don't be on the street, don't hang around.”*

Longinos Flores, youth program coordinator, Casa Aztlan

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When asked what types of young people were least likely to participate, the most common answer was teenagers because involvement in programs was not perceived as cool or they preferred hanging out to a structured program. Adolescents' participation, according to some, was also hampered by other commitments to school work and activities, part-time jobs, and caring for younger siblings.

Another difficult group to attract, according to many interviewees, were boys because either they or their parents saw the arts world as feminine and/or homosexual. However, the perception of dance (or other art forms) being a female activity did not appear to dominate in all cultures. We, for example, found more boys than girls at one session of a Cambodian dance class.

Young people in three of the focus groups told us that young people with low self-confidence would not be able to handle the types of critiques that were involved in some programs and were thus less likely to participate. Two directors said that they had a difficult time attracting and keeping young people with problems at home or school while other organizations (particularly the parks), as mentioned above, felt that they appealed to such groups.

Many of the staff and directors interviewed indicated that there were other groups of young people that they would like to involve in their programs including those from various racial and ethnic groups, those from low income families, and those with special needs. Staff at two Latino organizations said that they would like to attract more girls to their programs, noting that families in their communities were hesitant to let girls be out of the house unaccompanied by family members during out-of-school hours.

**What fosters and hinders participation?** Several staff members told us that increasing access to and participation in their programs were important goals for them. Directors, staff, and young people most often mentioned parental support, encouragement, or requirement as key factors to fostering participation.

Convenient locations also appeared to foster participation. Two thirds of the young people surveyed lived in the vicinity of the organization in which they were involved. Exceptions included participants in the three

downtown organizations that drew participants from around the city and suburbs. Noting the importance of location, David Schein, executive director of Free Street Programs, told us that their founding director was inspired to launch the program when he saw a statistic that only three percent of people went to theatre. He thus decided to take theatre to the people by bringing it into the neighborhoods.

Reputation and outreach helps to draw participants. About half of the interviewees noted the importance of word of mouth as a recruitment strategy. Also, outreach through flyers, ads, and recruitment at schools were common approaches mentioned in interviews. Indeed, one staff member started to do some theatre classes for the schools in order to recruit more young people to his after-school program.

Many also described how the atmosphere of their programs draws young people in and keeps them there. Ada Hinley, supervisor of West Chatham Park, explained that the key is "It's a safe environment. [It is] the overall friendliness and attitude we have here, and the discipline." Several staff and directors also emphasized the importance of being flexible and willing to accommodate young people's needs and schedules when discussing how they foster participation.

Interestingly, young people rarely mentioned the cost of the program as a primary factor in fostering (or hindering) participation—even at programs that were free or paid young people to participate. Only four directors and one staff member thought that cost was an inhibiting factor. A staff member at Anchor Graphics felt that some participants placed less value on the experience because it was free, and the director of ETA Creative Arts Foundation maintained that cost is not an obstacle because she believed any family can find the money if the experience is important enough to them.

Transportation concerns were mentioned most often when we asked directors, staff, and participants what hinders young people's involvement in the program. The most difficult programs to reach were those in the downtown area, far from the homes of most participants. Recognizing this barrier, the Museum of Contemporary Art sometimes provides transportation to and from their programs but still had some trouble attracting young people to free programs. (The instruc-

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*When I first came here, I thought it was going to be like a whole bunch of nerds and stuff like that . . . Because it's like a music school. I thought about who would attend a music school beside your mother making you come . . . But then I found out that there was people like me too.*

Participant, People's Music School

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tor we spoke to felt that the time of day classes are offered, early on Saturday mornings, also scared away some young people.)

Other barriers to participation related to gangs and safety concerns. While not a problem in all parts of the city, where gang violence is a problem it can be a tragedy for young people and programs according to several directors and staff. Parents' disorganization or lack of interest were also mentioned as barriers to involvement.

### *Benefits to young people*

Directors, staff, and young people spoke passionately about the benefits they attributed to their programs. Reflecting the findings of Brice-Heath, McLaughlin, and Soep, the benefits cited by study participants most often were related to life skills and developmental capacities rather than specifically to artistic mastery—even at institutions like the Ruth Page Foundation School, ETA Creative Arts Foundation, or the Chicago Children's Choir where many participants are planning careers in the arts. Both young people and adults emphasized how the arts often present multi-dimensional problems that allow participants to work through and master skills that they can apply in all aspects of their lives.

Almost as important as the various life skills fostered by arts programs, according to our informants, are the ways in which they give birth to creative expression. Interestingly, while the development of arts-related skills was often mentioned, it probably ranks third in importance. Other benefits emphasized were opportunities to make close friends, positive identity, happiness, more meaningful learning experiences than those in school, safe and structured environments, and exposure and gateways to new experiences and cultures.

**General life skills.** A list of the general life skills that adults and young people mentioned when describing program benefits reads like a classified ad: self-discipline, goal-orientation, ability to work with others, poise, and strong communication skills.

Shirley Burr, administrator at the Ruth Page Foundation School, explained that “in a dance class, you are not going to get a grade. The only thing you are going to get is what you accomplish. . . you don't get anything the easy way. Ballet is very hard. It's very unnatural. I have heard from parents

that they felt like their child learned discipline, hard work, pacing themselves, self control. Many of the associated learnings have stood them in good stead later on.”

Another common benefit mentioned was the ability to work well with others. Many young people reported that they learned a lot about others and most often described learning to appreciate differences in talents, personalities, perspectives, and cultures. A smaller number spoke of feeling supported by, liking, and learning from their peers. Young people from only one program talked about competition. Observations and focus group discussions, particularly at performing arts programs, provided considerable evidence that young people encourage each other. Participants in the ETA Creative Arts Foundation focus group told us that “big egos” don't work in their group, that it is important to work as a team, and to learn by watching each other. When we asked young people in the Chicago Children's Choir focus group what they would tell others about the program, their responses emphasized team work and interdependency, not individual accomplishment.

Self-esteem, poise, and pride of accomplishment were also repeatedly mentioned as benefits of the arts experience. Fifty percent of the young people surveyed said they learned a lot about themselves, 34 percent said they learned some, 9 percent were not sure, and 5 percent said they learned nothing. When asked “What are some of the things you learned about yourself?” respondents most often answered “that I'm good at something” or “that I can do/become something.” The next most common answer was that they learned something about their personality—that they are smart, unique, stubborn, outgoing, or crazy, for example. When asked if they feel proud of what they have been doing in arts activities, 75 percent said “yes, a lot” and 18 percent said “yes, somewhat proud.”

Some of the most emotional comments came in focus groups when young people were describing how the program helped them to feel more assured and proud of themselves. Theatre programs seemed to be particularly powerful in this respect. “You don't care what anyone thinks anymore,” said one participant in the Free Street focus group, “Like, you don't have any control over my life, and I do.” Another added: “And that comes from being

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*The best recruiting mechanism is the program. . . There is really not an air of pretentiousness at Street Level. We always have a smile, “hey how are you doing?” People are generally pleasant people and are open people and you know that's what we're about. You know one of our volunteers comes in and says it kind of feels like Cheers 'cause you walk in and everyone is like “Hey how are you doing? What's going on?”*

Paul Terruel,  
co-director,  
Street Level Youth Media

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*I was insecure in myself for a long time. I didn't know what I was going to do. I was just crazy with myself, but now I just act crazy with these shows and all that stuff.*

*I've gone a long way with confidence, cause you can nurture it here even if they holler at you . . . then you go outside and somebody tells you that you can't do something, then, I mean, it just gives you more energy. I can do it. If I can go and learn this script in two days and then on Thursday perform.*

Participants, ETA Creative Arts Foundation

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able to express yourself. Let yourself go without worrying about what people think.” Several interviewees also spoke about how their program fosters a future orientation by helping young people to understand options for the future and to feel confident in building a pathway to their goals.

**Creative expression.** After life skills, creative self expression was most often mentioned as a benefit of the arts programs. We heard over and over again that outlets for self expression should not be considered supplemental experiences, that they are fundamental to living a full and meaningful life. Self expression, according to many interviewees, provides an avenue for young people to connect with others and to come out of their shells. Several young people described how the positive expressive forms they learned in arts programs replaced personal expression through trouble-making. Artistic expression got some into trouble when they expressed themselves through graffiti or “tagging,” noting that this form of art is an important expression of young people in some communities, but which is absent in traditional art settings. A few staff and directors said that they felt that their programs provide alternatives to tagging.

**Art-related skills.** While emphasized less often than life skills and creative expression, most of those we spoke to included the acquisition of art skills when describing their program’s benefits. However, even those programs that emphasized mastery of art skills (six programs in the sample) did not narrow their focus to training. They also spoke of exposing young people to art forms and professions in the arts as well as fostering a love of the arts. Other programs aimed to provide basic artistic skills and concepts. The painting instructor at Yollocalli Youth Museum at the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum explained that, in addition to teaching the fundamentals of painting, he talks to young people about attitudes toward art and how they can be used “outside in the real world.” Discovering talent among local youth was also a concern of a few programs in the sample.

**Opportunity to make close friends.** Most programs seemed to foster an atmos-

phere that promoted the development of friendships between young people. Several participants described the warmth, support, and sincerity they received from other young people and how they were able to find friends with whom they identified. The performing arts experiences appeared to foster closer friendships and a team mentality more than visual arts programs. Additionally, in several programs young people said that although they had different friends on the “outside,” they felt a special connection and mutual understanding with young people in their program. Some also spoke about how the program allowed them to make friends with people who are different from them in terms of race, ethnicity, and income level.

**Positive identity.** The people involved in programs with a strong ethnic or racial focus spoke a great deal about how their activities help to foster a positive identity among participants. Abena Joan Brown, director of the ETA Creative Arts Foundation, told us that this positive sense of one’s own background is vital because “culture is the vehicle which drives all people forward. It is the vehicle through which we transmit values, standards, norms, aspirations. Culture tells us who we are.”

Cultural identity, however, is not the only type of identity conferred by some of these programs. Longinos Flores, youth program coordinator at Casa Aztlán, related how hard he had worked to deal with teenagers who were being destructive at the center. He explained that once he was able to help these young people feel a part of the program, to identify with it and the other people there, they stopped their destructive behavior. Similarly, a seventeen-year-old boy at Free Street emphasized the importance of identifying with program when he told us, “this is a gang of artists.”

**Happiness.** Perhaps the simplest yet most profound benefits described by directors, staff, and young people were happiness and joy. Several young people described moments when they were immersed in the art form as blissful—similar to what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls “flow experiences.”<sup>5</sup> Speaking about the joy she feels when she is

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<sup>5</sup> “Flow” occurs when people are able to meet the challenges of their environment with appropriate skills, and accordingly feel a sense of well-being, a sense of mastery, and a heightened sense of self-esteem.

## The Benefits of Performance and Exhibition Experiences

According to many of the young people and adults we spoke to, performances and exhibitions in which participants display their accomplishments are particularly powerful. An eleven-year-old girl who does arts and crafts activities at Gage Park told us that she feels happy when her work is on display: “It’s nice when your stuff is on display because people get to see what kind of work you can really do. And they see your personality and see whether you’re serious, whether you like to be funny, whether you like to use your imagination, whether you want to be into writing stories or writing comic books, and you just feel proud because people are saying, ‘Oh what a good job you did on your work’ and things like that.”

Reflecting Brice-Heath and Soep’s findings, focus group participants at Street Level Youth Media, Ruth Page Foundation School, and Shabbona Park spoke of their pride in performing and displaying their work in front of authentic audiences. The praise they received from real critics—not just their parents and teachers—was particularly valuable to them. Focus group participants who had only performed for or showed their work to family members tended to downplay the importance of those experiences. The focus group participants at the South Side YMCA, for example, told us that while they enjoyed dance recitals, they thought the audience would not give honest responses and did not know the difference when they made mistakes.

Directors and staff explained that performances and exhibitions provide important goals for participants as well as a time line that motivates progress and builds momentum. The experience of traveling to different communities, cities, and even countries (in a couple of programs) was a powerful one for some of the young people we spoke to, especially those who had rarely ventured outside of their neighborhoods. It seemed that, as their conception of the world and humanity expanded from these trips, so too did their vision of their future.

Many young people also emphasized that performing has helped them to overcome shyness and build greater self-esteem. Several young people and staff mentioned that such experiences help participants to connect with their parents because it provides an opportunity for parents to see and express their pride in their children’s accomplishments.

While most stressed the positive aspects of the performing or exhibiting experience, a couple of staff members talked about the fear of performance being debilitating for some young people, and young people in one focus group described an exhibition of their work in a different community where they felt uncomfortable about being judged by people to whom they could not relate.

dancing, an eleven year-old girl in the South Side YMCA’s ballet program told us, “It’s like when you eat a peppermint, I can’t explain it. It’s just like that, it’s free.” Both participants and staff noted that the enjoyment does not always come immediately. Often one has to develop a certain level of skill to feel the sense of joy or flow. However, several also told us that once young people experienced these feelings they were highly motivated to continue and increase their learning. Larry Long, artistic director at the Ruth Page Foundation School, described the richness and happiness that the arts bring to life this way: “Art is the soul of life. Art feeds what nothing else feeds. It is not left brain or right brain, it is heat, soul, anima. A child well-nourished in the arts lives a richer life.”

**More meaningful learning experiences than in school.** A subject that interviewees and focus group participants often brought up—even when we had not specifically asked about it—was the contrast between learning in the arts program and learning at school. Some felt that their arts program set higher standards than school arts programs do. A sixteen-year-old participant said that the education she was receiving at Anchor Graphics was much more “professional” and “intricate” than printmaking projects at school. Some stressed that arts provide an integrated learning experience that differs from school curriculum. Others noted the absence of some of the pressure typical in the school environment and described their arts program as more accepting and comfortable. Some emphasized that the learning

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*It's like the best feeling there is when you're really involved in something. I like to write too, and I get into that even more than this. It's like you get sort of a high feeling.*

Participant,  
Anchor Graphics

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*We can give these young people counseling. We can try to solve the problems and stresses they face on a day-to-day basis, and we can keep about half of them out of the criminal justice system. But we can't give them what art can give them, which is an appreciation of themselves. And the biggest problem these young people have is they don't know who they are, and they don't have an appreciation of themselves. They think living to be sixteen is an accomplishment because so many of their friends die at fifteen and younger. If we heard a gunshot right now, you and I would probably jump, but these young people would hit the floor. Because they've been trained. They know! They've been trained in survival. They've not been trained in aesthetics.*

Jesse Madison, president and ceo, Abraham Lincoln Centre

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that occurs in their programs is entirely self-motivated. Participants feel an urgency to learn, not for a grade, but for themselves.

**Exposure and gateway to new experiences and cultures.** The arts programs involved in the study appear to expand the worlds of some participants significantly—particularly those isolated by poverty. The programs provide avenues to different communities, cities, and countries. For some, the opportunity to see the world beyond the few blocks of their neighborhood is rare indeed. Performances provide opportunities for young people to travel across the city or the world, but programs also look for other opportunities to show their participants what is out there. Staff at Heartland Alliance, the People's Music School, and Abraham Lincoln Centre all mentioned obtaining free tickets to cultural events for their participants.

Organizations whose participants came from their surrounding neighborhoods sometimes served as gateways for young people to higher level programs. A park director, for example, said that young people who become very interested in photography or gymnastics at his park are referred to more intensive programs at citywide parks programs. Some participants at Ruth Page Foundation School found their way there after being exposed to ballet at smaller programs near their homes.

**Safety and prevention.** Directors, staff, and young people at several organizations spoke of how their program provides psychological safety for participants. Some described it as a second home or family. Other young people appreciated that their program gave them a way to participate in safe activities and to avoid dangerous ones. Interestingly only four people talked about their programs preventing participation in gangs, pregnancy, or substance abuse. In most cases the benefits of the arts experience were described in terms of what it promotes rather than what it prevents.

#### *Programmatic and administrative strengths and challenges*

The success of various approaches employed by the arts programs we examined is dependent on a wide range of factors (not least of which are the type of art being taught and the types of participants involved). Further research is required to link certain

approaches with various benchmarks of success. However, as Brice-Heath and others (see pages 2–3) have noted, certain aspects of arts programming seem to promote the overall development of young people as well as their artistic development. In this section we highlight the factors that adults and young people in these programs emphasized as particularly important.

**Strong participant-staff relationships.** No aspect of arts programs appears to be more important than the relationships among young people and staff. According to directors, staff, and especially young people in all types of programs studied, such ties are fundamental to the benefits that the programs confer. These relationships often involve a combination of high expectations and caring about young people as whole human beings. Although the young people we spoke with did not feel universally understood and supported by the staff, when asked on the written questionnaire if they felt close to the staff or teachers, 74 percent said that they did. When asked why they felt close to staff, approximately equal numbers said because the staff have known them a long time, because the staff are fun or nice, or because the staff help them when they have problems.

Seven of the eighteen organizations had one or more charismatic staff members that appeared to make the whole program what it was. For example, when asked why they stay in the program, participants at the Ruth Page Foundation School all pointed to its founder and artistic director, Larry Long. At the end of the written questionnaire, we asked young people if there was anything else they wanted to tell us about the program. Among the most common responses were expressions of how much they liked their teachers.

We also saw evidence of the struggle in programs that lack such key staff members. When we talked with young people at the South Side YMCA, they had recently lost a longtime, much-loved ballet instructor. Many young people dropped out when she left, some following her to her new organization. The Chinese American Service League depends on volunteer instructors for their art classes, and thus has a high rate of turnover. The young people we spoke with complained about having so many different teachers.

**High expectations and flexibility.** In many of the programs we examined there is



## Who Benefits the Most?

When asked who reaps the greatest benefits from their programs, directors and staff most often pointed to those who are self-directed, participate often, and put the most effort into the programs. Others indicated the young people whose parents and families are most involved, those willing to take risks and try new things, or those used to a structured atmosphere and can work in a group. The staff and directors we spoke with at Gage Park and the Abraham Lincoln Centre, by contrast, felt that the most needy young people get the most out of their programs because they have few other choices of positive, supportive, and fun places to be when they are not in school.

an expectation that participants make a serious effort to learn and progress in the art form. When asked what the requirements for participation in their programs were, the most common factors mentioned by directors and staff were behavior, attendance, and achievement. Participation in Free Street is a job, and young people are paid for their work. They are required to sign a contract, and have strict penalties for tardiness. The definition for “acceptable behavior” varied from program to program. At one end of the spectrum are programs where participants must ask to go to the rest room (and are sometimes chastised for not taking care of that before class) to others where young people wander in and out of the room while activities are in progress.

While most programs had at least some rigid rules, certain organizations consciously built flexibility into their programs for a variety of reasons. For example, Ursula Elbert, the dance instructor at Abraham Lincoln Centre, told us “they have to keep attendance, but no specific regulations. I used to have a stricter policy, but a lot of things will stop the girls from coming, whether it’s violence... Attendance is not an issue.” We found flexibility in other programs in terms of their curricula which were intentionally loose with classes or programs ultimately driven by young people’s interests.

**Young people lead and learn from each other.** In many of the eighteen programs, participants’ roles ranged from learner to leader. At Shabbona Park, Abraham Lincoln Centre, Street Level Youth Media, and Free Street Programs, young people wrote or developed their performances. At Heartland Alliance, the Chicago Children’s Choir, People’s Music School, Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center, and ETA Creative

Arts Foundation, young people plan tours, classes, and participate in the day-to-day problem-solving necessary to make a program work. At the Chicago Children’s Choir, participant input is formalized in the Singers Council which makes recommendations about the program. Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center has open mike nights where participants of all ages can voice their opinions about the center. Young people at several of the programs also help to lead classes, and at Street Level Youth Media, several former participants have become staff members. We also observed many instances of young people learning from each other in informal ways, watching other participants’ movements, listening to their music, studying their paintings. This was particularly in evidence in dance programs.

A few programs did not seek much input from young people. However, we did not gather much evidence as to why. One park director felt uncomfortable with the possible consequences of ceding any control to participants. Larry Long at Ruth Page talked about difficulties involved in young people critiquing each other, that sometimes it hurt more than it helped. Indeed, as the ETA young people pointed out, there has to be a lot of mutual respect and caring before young people can constructively critique one another. When we asked focus group participants “Who decides what you do in this program?” approximately a third said “youth and adults together” and another third said “the adults who work here.” Less than 15 percent said “the youth in the group.”

**Staffing issues.** When asked what qualities they look for in staff, most indicated that attitude toward young people, skills important to activities, and past work experiences with young people were “very important.” Those

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*Dance is something difficult to verbalize. If you can tell the story or sing it or write it, don’t dance the story. Because dance is only suited for those things which you cannot somehow otherwise express.*

Larry Long, artistic director,  
Ruth Page Foundation School

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*. . . everybody here, even though they holler at you, they care about you. You know what I'm saying, it's a bond. The choreographer might say, you know, "dance a lot, do it over" but she loves you. You understand? She loves you enough to show it to you, you understand, to break it down so she can tell you what you doin' wrong. It's like a trust thing. You know that they care about you. That's why they are trying. They're not just hollering at you for sport.*

Participant, ETA Creative Arts Foundation

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qualities that most found to be "important" were: life experiences, formal education/training, residing in the community(ies) they serve, and coming from the same background as participants. Six of the eighteen directors spoke of having difficulty finding qualified staff at the salaries they are able to offer.

We observed a wide range of instruction techniques from quiet guidance to public criticism in the eighteen programs. However, directors, staff, and young people repeatedly pointed to certain traits as those of the most successful staff in the programs. For example, many spoke about staff providing a great deal of individual attention to each participant, helping individuals improve from his/her current level. Successful staff in several programs, particularly visual arts programs, were described as those who allow young people to explore on their own, who see them as individuals and tailor their teaching and support to their particular needs. Another trait we found in staff in several programs was that they talked to young people about a range of issues including their lives and their futures rather than only about art.

In our discussions, we also learned of the challenges facing staff in these programs. Establishing authority and controlling behavior were often-repeated challenges. A couple of staff also spoke about the challenge of working with young people of cultures different from their own. Another difficulty was the lack of time for reflection on their work. Several noted that they enjoyed the interview, which often lasted one and a half to two hours, because it allowed them a rare opportunity to think about their goals, progress, and concerns.

Volunteers were a key staffing element of several programs. Five directors spoke about volunteers being vital to the organization, and only two organizations did not have any volunteers. Indeed, Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center relies almost entirely on volunteers.

**Financial stability.** Having a home of one's own counts, according to the directors of Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center, Ruth Page Foundation School, People's Music School, and ETA Creative Arts Foundation. Although we rarely asked direct questions about their facilities, these directors noted that owning a building provides orga-

nizational stability and allows for significant increases in offerings.

When asked about obstacles to achieving more for young people, fundraising issues were the most common answers among both directors and staff. A strong message from several interviewees was that funders prefer to fund arts programs offered by arts organizations over those provided by social service agencies.

When asked what additional funds were needed for, the most common answers were capital improvements, more space, additional staff members, expanding or maintaining current arts activities, technology or equipment, and general operating expenses. A common complaint was that funders and policy makers are only interested in start-up programs. Once a program is established and stable, they cut their support. Thus, according to Ron Bieganski, artistic director at Free Street Programs, "the system is set up to keep you struggling."

**Evaluation.** The most common evaluation strategies employed by the eighteen organizations involved accounting for attendance and participant demographics in order to respond to funder requirements or to comply with accreditation standards. Several conducted formal or informal surveys of participants, one had conducted a parent survey, and one related program participation to school performance. Few had ever used an outside evaluation consultant.

**Partnerships.** Most of the organizations involved in the study had at least one partnership with another organization; four of them reported that much or all of their work is made possible through partnerships. Directors and staff at Heartland Alliance and Casa Atzlan noted that some groups seek to form alliances with them to reach the young people in their communities. Several directors of community-based programs who had formed alliances with arts organizations or other non-community-based organizations mentioned that such partnerships take a great deal of time and other resources and often involve a host of logistical challenges. They consider the alliances worth the effort because young people benefit from better arts programming than they could do on their own. Three directors said they would like to do more collaborative work than they are doing now.

## Summary and Implications for Social Policy

### Study Summary

Our study research found nearly 500 organizations that offer non-school-based arts activities to young people in Chicago, over half of which are offered in park district facilities and libraries. Nonprofit social agencies also offer a wide range of programs. Community programs offer many children a free or low cost introduction to arts experiences as audience member or participant. These opportunities sometimes serve as gateways to more advanced art education and enjoyment of the diverse art forms available in Chicago. Arts and cultural organizations offer high quality arts programs as well, but many of them reach relatively few children. Most programs sponsoring arts and cultural organizations are free, low cost, or have scholarship assistance but transportation is often a significant additional cost.

Many programs under all auspices devote attention to the overall development and well being of their young participants in addition to pursuit of their art goals. In this way they offer primary social supports to young people by providing safe and comfortable places to spend time, respectful relationships, and constructive activities.

Young people reported that whatever their route into an arts program, they continue because of their own interests in the arts, friendships with peers and adults, and pure enjoyment of the experiences they have in the program. Staff talent and dedication—expressed in a wide variety of ways—are at the center of programs that invite young peoples’ attachment and that nurture competence and self-esteem. Both staff and young people agree that parents are often very important to the smooth operation of arts programs and to the consistent attendance of participants.

### Implications for Social Policy

Based on our examination of arts opportunities for young people in Chicago, we offer the following considerations for social policy:

**Arts funding does not reach many young people.** There appears to be a disconnect between where the money is (larger, established arts organizations) and where the young people are (community-based non-arts

organizations). Partnerships among arts organizations and community institutions can and do help bridge this gap but they are time-consuming to arrange and to manage. Given that the vast majority of organizations providing arts programming for young people are *not* arts organizations, funders might consider directing their resources toward helping community institutions to maintain and expand their own programs or to partner with arts organizations. One approach that has been employed in other cities is to provide community organizations with “vouchers” which are funds they can use to contract with arts institutions to bring more programs into their neighborhoods. To be effective, such approaches would probably have to be maintained over a significant period of time. Although an eight-week residency of an arts organization in a community center can provide a good experience for young people, it does not compare to an ongoing program that allows kids to develop strong relationships with staff and to extend their skills over years.

**Transportation strategies are essential.** In addition to providing more programs close to where young people live, participation in downtown and other programs far from their homes might be facilitated through efforts to teach potential participants public transportation skills and perhaps subsidize travel costs.

**Staff contributions need to be recognized.** The key to many of the positive experiences that directors, staff, and young people described to us and that we observed was the relationship between staff and participants. We also found that the strength and very existence of many programs hinged on the talents of one or two staff members. Funders, policy makers, and other decision makers might consider how to commend those currently working in the field through awards and fellowships as well as lower the barriers to entry for others. As in other areas of the nonprofit and public sectors, low wages, few or no benefits, and long hours often attract only those willing to make Herculean efforts or those without other options. Some programs, such as Chicago’s Gallery 37, have found creative ways to connect more artists and arts organizations to communities with the support of public and private funds. Such efforts merit examination and possibly adaptation to other cities.

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*I accessed the schools because I knew that's where the young people were. I extended my services in my outreach program to the schools and once I started this outreach program then, oh my God, my after-school program was crazy and I had to finally close the registration at 65 young people.*

Joe Savino, drama program director, Shabbona Park.

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Better training of staff may help to improve the quality of existing programs. Organizations established expressly for this purpose might help to improve the leadership and instruction in a wide range of arts programs.

**Build bridges between schools and out-of-school arts programs.** Given evidence that many young people need safe places to be after school, we recommend that policy makers consider efforts to connect schools with arts programs. One staff member told us that he developed a theatre program in some neighborhood schools to attract young people to the after-school theatre program at a public park. Much of the federal support for after-school programs is now flowing to schools. Because our findings suggest the importance young people attribute to non-school environments, we recommend that policy makers consider boosting support of community institutions as well.

**Foster research on participation in arts programs.** To bolster the support of arts programs for young people, it is important for funders, policy makers, and program directors to have more empirical data about who participates in programs and what the benefits are. Some of the research might be conducted by young people themselves. Questions worth pursuing include:

- What is the meaning of arts experiences in young people's daily lives?
- What are the qualities and benefits of programs offered by public and non-profit non-arts organizations that are now the major source of arts opportunities?
- Can data collection systems be developed and maintained by organizations offering arts programs to permit assessment of the number and charac-

teristics of young people who participate in them as well as the sources, restrictions, and uses of various funding streams?

- What is the demand for arts programming among young people and their families and how do supply and demand interact in different sections of a city?
- What is the impact of public policy, private funding, cultural attitudes, among other forces, on the number and types of programs in different areas of the city?
- What do parents and other caretakers say about their role in young people's participation in arts programs?
- What characteristics of arts programs or organizations appeal to hard-to-reach young people such as adolescents, especially boys?
- What is the value of ethnic and cultural arts programs to children, families, and communities?

This report contributes new information about the range of arts programming for young people in one city and calls attention to the role of arts programs in supporting young people's development. The emphasis placed on the overall development of young people and participants' descriptions of their experiences offer testimony to the importance of viewing voluntary programs and activities as the foundation for a social service system. A system premised on such a perspective would be proactive in promoting the development of young people and not focus attention and resources almost exclusively on reclaiming lives in trouble.

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*That's the way I tell (my friends). I tell them, let's go chill at my center. . . That's the way I describe it, I just say "my center" like my second home.*

Piro Lopez, volunteer bomba teacher and former participant, Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center

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## Web Sites

ArtsEdNet, The Getty's Art Education Web Site  
<http://www.artsednet.getty.edu>

Creative Partnerships for Prevention  
<http://www.cpprev.org/contents.html>  
Using humanities to build resilience in youths

Kennedy Center; ArtsEdge  
<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org>

Kids Campaign  
<http://www.kidscampaigns.org/home.html> An information/action center  
(includes a large section on arts)

National Arts Education Association  
<http://www.Naea-reston.org/publications-list.html>

National Assessment of Educational Progress (National Assessment Governing Board)  
<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard> Arts Report Card

National Endowment for the Humanities  
<http://www.neh.fed.us>

National Endowment for the Arts  
<http://arts.endow.gov>

National Governor's Association  
<http://www.nga.org/core.html> Site  
(includes a section on children and youth)

National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts  
<http://www.natguild.org>

US Department of Education (published work, including arts related)  
<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/studies.html>

Voices for Children  
<http://www.voices4children.org>

## **Profiles of Eighteen Case Study Organizations**

**Abraham Lincoln Centre**  
**3858 Cottage Grove**  
**Chicago, IL 60653**  
**773.373.6600**

### **Focus of Case Study: Hip Hop Pom Pom Program**

The Abraham Lincoln Centre was founded in 1905 and has been based primarily in the Bronzeville neighborhood on Chicago's south side. In 1998 the Centre had an annual budget of \$10 million. There are twenty-six locations operating between 22nd Street and the southern boundary of the city. Participants are enrolled as members rather than clients. Serving the communities immediately surrounding each location, the Centre aims to help members improve their lives through multifaceted programming including programs for the elderly, children, and adolescents, and special programs for those who are mentally and developmentally disabled. There is a division devoted to employment and training. In many neighborhoods, the Centre is virtually the only human service agency for the mostly poor, African American people who live near by. Abraham Lincoln Centre serves approximately 2,000 to 3,000 children and youth annually, including those in the federally-funded Head Start and Title XX Day Care programs. In 1998, about 100 young people participated in free, ongoing arts programs that the Centre offered through its partnerships with several arts organizations, including Bryant Ballet, ETA Creative Arts Foundation, and Hubbard Street Dance. The Hip Hop Pom Pom dance program began at the home of the instructor who lived in the neighborhood and who began teaching dance to local children and youth seventeen years ago and later moved into the Abraham Lincoln Centre. In 1998, approximately thirty girls between the ages of eight and nineteen participated in the Hip-Hop Pom Pom program twice a week, and a core squad that met on Saturdays did performances, talents shows and competitions throughout the year.

**Anchor Graphics**  
**119 W. Hubbard Street**  
**Chicago, IL 60610**  
**312.595.9598**

### **Focus of Case Study: Saturday High School Program**

Anchor Graphics, located in the Near North area of Chicago, was established in 1990 as a professional print shop. From its inception, educating young people about the process of printmaking while giving them an opportunity to experience the focus and intensity of a professional shop was integral to the founding members' vision. Anchor Graphics has varied its approach to education over the years, first forming a four-year partnership with the Marwen Foundation, in which Marwen paid for an instructor and Anchor Graphics provided space for classes. Later Anchor Graphics established a long-term partnership with the School of the Art Institute to provide community-based programs. Anchor Graphics has also worked with Nellum Youth Shelter teaching printmaking to young boys who are wards of the state. In 1998, Anchor Graphics had an annual budget of \$100,000 and offered a printmaking class for high school students every Saturday from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. in a ten-week session. Approximately forty-five young people from fourteen to eighteen years old participated. Students traveled from all over the city, some as far away as an hour by train, to attend this free program.



**Casa Aztlan**  
**1831 South Racine**  
**Chicago, IL 60608**  
**312.666.5508**

**Focus of Case Study: Rhythm/Dance Program**

Casa Aztlan has provided numerous programs and services to the families of the Pilsen neighborhood in the near southwest side of the city for more than thirty years. Through English as a second language programs, health services, and pottery classes among other services, the community center realizes its mission to promote self-sufficiency and self-determination. Most of the services at Casa Aztlan focus on helping newly-immigrated Mexicans and other Latinos acclimatize to life in the United States and on providing support to families who have been in the U.S. for generations. Arts and cultural programs specifically aim to preserve Mexican culture and create a source of pride for Mexican American people. In 1998, Casa Aztlan had an annual budget of \$350,000 and approximately 300 children participated in their various programs. One hundred were involved in arts and culture activities. Many of the cultural programs held at Casa Aztlan have occurred through partnerships with other arts organizations, including Merit Music Program, Cable Access, and Pro Arts Studio. In 1998 we observed the Rhythm/Dance class which was offered twice a week as one component of a five-day after-school youth program. Approximately fifteen youth from six to thirteen years old participated in the free Rhythm/Dance class.

**Chicago Children's Choir**  
**Chicago Cultural Center**  
**78 East Washington Street**  
**Chicago, IL 60602**  
**312.849.8300**

**Focus of Case Study: Beverly/Morgan Park Neighborhood Choir**

Through its presence in seven neighborhoods, thirty-two schools, and the downtown Chicago Cultural Center, in 1998 the Chicago Children's Choir, operating on an annual budget of just over \$1 million had a place in the lives of nearly 3,000 children and youth. Founded in 1956 as a single choir in Hyde Park, the Choir has evolved over the past 40 years into a three-tiered program that has reached children and young people in forty-seven school choirs and ten after-school neighborhood choirs. It also has a highly selective Concert Choir that tours in the U.S. and abroad. Despite changes in the size and structure of the program, Christopher Moore's founding vision has not changed. By bringing together children and youth from every race, ethnicity, and income level to focus on a common goal of making music, the choirs aim to develop understanding and camaraderie. Choir members pay a fee to participate, but scholarships are available. The oldest of the neighborhood choirs, Beverly/Morgan Park Neighborhood Choir, which meets in the Beverly Art Center, was established in 1993. In 1997, it had sixty-eight members, most of whom were between the ages of eight and thirteen. True to the mission of the choir, the racial and ethnic heritages of the young singers were as diverse as the music they sang, including Asian, African American, European, Hebrew, African, and Latino works.

**Chinese American Service League**  
**2326 S. Canal Street 2nd Floor**  
**Chicago, IL 60616**  
**312.808.0280**

**Focus of Case Study: Drawing Class**

The Chinese American Service League (CASL) was founded in 1978 as a social service agency for Chinese immigrants of all ages and provides a variety of services for the China Town community. In 1998, in addition to the drawing class, CASL offered arts classes in

Chinese calligraphy, opera, and dance in year-round sessions that ran in ten to twelve week segments. Art teachers are essentially volunteers, paid only a small stipend for their transportation expenses. Children in the drawing class were between five and thirteen years old, and many of them were part of a more extensive after-school program offered at CASL. In 1998 the CASL had an annual budget of \$3.1 million. Fees for the drawing class were \$15 per month, or \$45 for a quarter, although some scholarships were available. In addition to imparting artistic skill in drawing, CASL aimed to foster developmental skills like communication and self-expression through participation in the program. In 1998, about fifty young people participated in arts programs at CASL.

**ETA Creative Arts Foundation**

**7558 S. Chicago Ave  
Chicago, IL 60619  
773.752.3955**

**Focus of Case Study: Theatre Classes**

As a performing arts organization, ETA's primary mission is the preservation, promulgation and perpetuation of the African and African-American aesthetic, the vision that has guided the organization from its inception nearly 30 years ago. Through a combination of classes offered in performing arts and performances given in the theatre, ETA reaches thousands of people each year. In 1998, six new productions, most written by black writers, were offered every season, and a highly diverse schedule of classes for children and youth aged six to nineteen continued year round. ETA works with schools, social service agencies, and numerous community and arts organizations to provide programming to young people in Chicago. In 1998 ETA had an annual budget of \$1.1 million. Many of their students live in South Shore, Chatham, or other nearby south side neighborhoods, but some come from as far away as Michigan and Indiana. In 1998, fees for classes were \$300 per year, but for the first year, full or partial scholarships were available.

**Free Street Programs**

**1419 West Blackhawk  
Chicago, IL 60622  
773.772.7248**

**Focus of Case Study: TeenStreet Year-Round Program**

From the time of its founding in 1969, Free Street Programs has provided performing arts opportunities to young people who have limited access to arts and cultural institutions. Originally, that meant traveling the city in a sound truck with a portable stage and professional company, taking theater into neighborhoods. Over the years, Free Street Programs has targeted senior citizens homes, schools, prisons, and parks for its program participants. Currently, Free Street focuses on disadvantaged youth and teens, who are either physically or economically disadvantaged, helping them to increase their communication and writing skills while showing them the "artist's path." In 1997, Free Street reached a total of 760 young people through four different programs: TeenStreet (a summer program and a year-round company), Parenteen, Arts Literacy Residencies, and Arts Connect. The programs take place in many different locations, including city parks, schools, and hospitals. All of these programs are essentially free. TeenStreet is a paid "job," funded by a city employment program. In 1998 Free Street Programs had an annual budget of just over \$300,000. TeenStreet's year-round company is located in Pulaski Park, on the near northwest side of the city, and is a highly selective program that employs approximately twelve young people from fifteen to nineteen years old from all over the city. Participants attend rehearsal twice a week. Each year, the 12 teens who comprise the TeenStreet year-round company create a new show which grows out of their own writings and artistic goals.

**Gage Park**  
**2411 West 55th Street**  
**Chicago, IL 60629**  
**773.747.6147**

**Focus of Case Study: Park Kids Art and Crafts Program**

Available in several different parks around the city, Park Kids is an after-school program run by the Chicago Park District. It operates from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and includes one hour each of sports, arts, and homework assistance for children and youth ages six to thirteen. There is a small fee for participating. In addition to the Park Kids program, Gage Park offers arts and crafts, dancing, and other arts activities to people of all ages in the surrounding neighborhood and has done so since the park opened in the late 1920s. In 1998 the park had an annual budget of approximately \$250,000. Each year, approximately 5,000 to 8,000 children and youth participate in all of Gage Park's programs, and a little under 500 participate in all of the arts-related programs, including summer camp. By offering arts and crafts to approximately 60 participants in Park Kids each day, the Park's supervisor hoped to introduce kids to a variety of activities that they may not encounter otherwise, thereby providing an experience that they may want to pursue in greater depth elsewhere. Equal numbers of participants are of Latino or African American heritage which is reflective of the surrounding neighborhood in which most of the participants live.

**Heartland Alliance for Human Need & Human Rights**  
**4750 North Sheridan**  
**Chicago, IL 60640**  
**773-271-1073**

**Focus of Case Study: Cambodian Dance**

Heartland Alliance is an umbrella organization of three companies: TIA/Chicago Connections (TIA stands for Travelers and Immigrants Aid, the former name of the organization), Chicago Health Outreach, and Century Place Development. The overall mission of helping low-income adults, children and families through multifaceted programming to promote self-sufficiency is realized through a variety of programs and services. Through TIA/Chicago Connections, refugee services are offered to families across Chicago, although many are concentrated in the areas surrounding the Heartland Alliance offices in the Edgewater, Uptown, and Albany Park neighborhoods on Chicago's northeast side. In 1998, the Refugees Service Unit of TIA/Chicago Connections had an annual budget of \$450,000 and offered programs to Cambodian, Vietnamese, Ethiopian, Bosnian, and Somali families. The Cambodian Dance program was established as a way of reaching Cambodian families and preserving Cambodian culture. This free dance class took shape sometime around 1990 through the effort of volunteer teachers working in an apartment rented by TIA/Chicago Connections in Albany Park, a neighborhood with a large Cambodian population. In 1998, approximately fifteen participants aged six through mid-teens attended once a week classes conducted in the Cambodian language. Family support and involvement are integral to this program. Parents are important resources for moral support, costumes, make-up, and transportation.

**Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum**  
**1852 West 19th Street**  
**Chicago, IL 60608**  
**312.738.1503**

**Focus of Case Study: Yollocalli Youth Museum**

Located in the Pilsen/Little Village neighborhood, the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum is a community center and museum for Mexican arts which was founded in 1987 by local school teachers. Its central mission is to provide quality arts education for children, youths

and adults, focused specifically on Mexican art and culture and the contributions that Mexican people have made to the arts. The Center accomplishes this goal through programs, events, concerts, and collaborative projects with other organizations. Under the Center's auspices, but housed in a separate building, the Yollocalli Youth Museum is a youth employment program and has an additional goal: to provide career training and guidance to help foster a sense of future orientation among program participants. Ranging from fifteen to nineteen years old, ten young people were paid to participate in the program in 1998. Students learn a range of visual art techniques but focus mostly on painting, and their work is exhibited throughout the Youth Museum.

**Museum of Contemporary Art**  
**220 East Chicago Ave.**  
**Chicago, IL 60611**  
**312.280.2660**

**Focus of Case Study: Computer Graphics Class**

The Museum of Contemporary Art was founded in 1945. The museum recently moved into a modern new building located in the downtown Michigan Avenue shopping district. Classes at the museum are diverse and draw students of all ages from across the city on an annual basis. Included in the yearly schedule are classes located both at the museum and at parks, with programs geared towards families, teens, and school groups. In 1998 the museum had an annual budget of \$11.4 million and the education programs operated on a budget of \$628,000. Of major significance to the museum staff responsible for education is the goal of teaching creative self-expression as the process of art. In order to make classes accessible, the museum provides buses for school groups and others to travel to and from classes, offers free family passes to all kids who visit the museum in a school group. In addition, it schedules parallel classes for parents to attend while their children are in separate classes. In 1998, the computer graphics class involved about ten students per session, ranging in age from twelve to eighteen. There was a fee for participation, but the majority of students received scholarships that covered part or all of the cost of attendance.

**The People's Music School**  
**931 West Eastwood Ave.**  
**Chicago, IL 60640**  
**773-784-7032**

**Focus of Case Study: Music Lessons and Classes**

As a native of the Dominican Republic, Rita Simo, the director of The People's Music School, received a free music education. Many years later, after moving to the United States, she discovered that most people in the U.S. must pay to attend concerts or receive private music instruction. Based on her strongly held belief that democracy exists when people have equal opportunities, including the opportunity to receive a music education regardless of their economic capabilities, she founded the organization in 1976. The People's Music School began with 45 students and instruction in music theory, piano, and guitar conducted by a few teachers who donated their time. By 1995 the organization had raised enough money to purchase its own building, and in 1998 offered ten different levels of music theory, and private and group instruction for almost every instrument, led by twenty-three paid teachers. In 1998 the school had an annual budget of \$288,000. Three hundred students come from across the city to participate annually. They pay \$10 per semester plus 2 hours of family volunteer time per month for the program. Parents and community members are crucial to the organization, as most administrative, housekeeping, and operational duties are performed by volunteers. The majority of students are children and youth, although adults may also participate. Students are Asian, Latino, or African American, a reflection of the north side Uptown community in which the music school is located. All concerts given by the School are free and open to the community.

**Ruth Page Foundation School**  
**1016 North Dearborn**  
**Chicago, IL 60610**  
**312-337-6543**

**Focus of Case Study: Dance Classes**

The Ruth Page Foundation School was founded in 1971 to continue the professional work of the dancer and teacher, Ruth Page. Accordingly, the organization's artistic director and founder, Larry Long, a former member of the Ruth Page Ballet Company, defines his mission as operating a school that provides a serious dance education to children and adults, regardless of their future hopes or prospects in dance. Yet as a serious dance school, teachers do hope and expect that some of the students will go on to be professional dancers. In 1998 the school had an annual budget of \$250,000. The organization offers six levels of ballet, jazz, and tap dance, with a primary focus on ballet. Classes run from September to June, with a summer session offered in June and July. More than 50 percent of the classes offered are focused on children and youth, the remainder on adults. Many of the students are Caucasian and female, although Asian, African American, and Latinos also participate. There is a fee to take classes, but scholarships and financial aid are available. In 1998, approximately 400 children and young people were enrolled.

**Segundo Ruiz Belviz Cultural Center**  
**1632 North Milwaukee Avenue**  
**Chicago, IL 60647**  
**773.235.3988**

**Focus of Case Study: Bomba Class**

Growing out of the Latin American Development Organization, the Segundo Ruiz Belviz Cultural Center was established in 1971 to support Latino, particularly Puerto Rican, teens. By providing programs in artistic and creative expression, the Center hopes to empower youths with pride and self-esteem, helping them to become productive and civic-minded citizens. Housed in its own building and heavily reliant on volunteers, the Center offers a variety of performing and visual arts classes that may vary from year to year, depending upon student interest, availability of teachers, and local or national events that impact the Latino and Puerto Rican communities. In 1998, the Center had an annual budget of \$78,000 and approximately 200 to 300 students, ranging from ten years old to adults, participated in their free classes; three-quarters of the participants were fourteen to eighteen years old. Nearly all of the students were Latino, about half of whom were Puerto Rican and half Mexican. Segundo Ruiz Belviz Cultural Center is located in the center of Wicker Park on the city's west side and draws many students from this area, although a significant number come from other parts of the city to access the Puerto Rican-oriented programs that are less prevalent elsewhere. In 1998, the free bomba classes which involved music and dance met twice a week and involved approximately twenty-five mostly male participants aged 8 to 18.

**Shabbona Park**  
**6935 W. Addison St.**  
**Chicago, IL 60634**  
**312-742-7608**

**Focus of Case Study: Drama Program**

Shabbona Park has provided theatre programs to the children, youth and adults of the Portage Park neighborhood on Chicago's northwest side for at least 30 years. The programs have changed over time, adapting to student interest and the Chicago Park District's fluctuating resources and priorities. In 1998, Shabbona Park operated on an annual budget of \$117,000 and offered an outreach program for grades three to eight in several local schools, as well as two after-school programs, Drama Etc. for young teens, and a general

drama program for children aged seven to twelve. The Park's theatre programs are free and operate during the school year. In total, they served approximately 650 children in 1998, with sixty-five participating in the drama program. The programs have close ties with nearby schools and the largely middle income, Caucasian neighborhood surrounding it. They rely on parent volunteers to provide costumes, sets, and administrative support for the two musicals they produce each year—one in the fall and one in the spring. In 1998, Shabbona Park also offered classes in arts and crafts and woodcraft.

**South Side YMCA**  
**6330 S. Stony Island**  
**Chicago 60637**  
**773.947.0700**

**Focus of Case Study: Ballet Classes**

Located in the largely African American Woodlawn neighborhood, the South Side YMCA offers ballet in response to the community's desire for this type of programming. Ballet is the only arts-oriented class offered at this YMCA, where a wide range of services for children, youth, and families draws mostly those living within a 5 to 7 mile radius of the center. In 1998, approximately 65 percent of the memberships were family memberships. Ballet was offered in seven-week sessions from September through June for ages 4 to 18, and there was a fee for this program. The majority of the approximately 100 participants were African American girls, between 9 and 13 years old. In 1998 the Y had an annual budget of \$2.2 million. According to the director of the South Side YMCA, the mission and goal of the ballet classes is primarily to teach the techniques of ballet, while also fostering self-esteem, building self-confidence, and providing a venue for the young people to exercise.

**Street Level Youth Media**  
**1856 West Chicago Ave.**  
**Chicago, IL 60622**  
**773.862.0754**

**Focus of Case Study: Various Programs**

Street Level Youth Media is the result of a merger of Street Level Video, which began in 1993, and Live Wire, which began in 1995. The mission of the organization is to provide teens with free access to the latest technology, including video, web design, and sound equipment. This access gives youth the opportunity to express themselves freely, an opportunity the founders believe is self-empowering. Located in a store front on the west side, Street Level is organized as a free drop-in center and has two satellites, one in the Edgewater neighborhood and one in the Armory Park neighborhood, both on the city's north side. Street Level also works in partnership with public schools, social service agencies, the Chicago Park District, and other arts organizations, both large and small, across the city. In 1998 Street Level had an annual budget of \$350,000. With four directors working as collaborators, this program draws approximately 1,000 students from across the city each year. The children and young people who participated in 1998 were seven to eighteen years old, most of whom were either African American or Latino, although approximately 30 percent were Asian, Caucasian, American Indian, or from other ethnic groups.

**West Chatham Park Cultural Center**  
**8223 S. Princeton Avenue**  
**Chicago, IL 60620**  
**312.747.6998**

**Focus of Case Study: Arts and Crafts Program**

Since 1991, West Chatham Park has offered arts and crafts to children and young people in the West Chatham neighborhood on the city's south side, including T-shirt design, sculpture, wood burning, drawing, painting, and sewing. In 1998, the park operated on an annual budget of \$106,000 from the Chicago Park District, and several hundred young people between five and seventeen years old participated in their arts and crafts program between rounds of impromptu basketball or softball. The kids work at their own pace and without formal programmatic guidelines. This free program exposes kids to a large variety of arts and crafts activities with the goal of expanding their knowledge of different art forms, techniques, and applications for their own lives. Most participants live in the largely African American neighborhood surrounding the Park. Through arts residencies, partnerships with local schools, Gallery 37, Joel Hall Dance Center and other arts organizations, West Chatham Park also offers dance classes, theatre programs and more formally-guided arts projects throughout the year. The Park also offers programs for adults and seasonal family-oriented parties.





## Authors

**Amelia Kohm** is a research associate at Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Her research is primarily focused on *primary supports* for children and families—traditional community organizations such as community centers, clubs, religious programs, libraries, and parks. She is co-directing the National Study of Nonprofit Strategic Restructuring. She also has published articles and papers and given presentations around the country on strategic restructuring. She has directed research projects and published reports concerning the scope of primary supports in Chicago and the Tutor/Mentor Connection, a Chicago-based initiative. Ms. Kohm has worked in the philanthropic sector with The Sears-Roebuck Foundation, The Donors Forum of Chicago, and The Illinois Humanities Council. She has an M.A. in social service work administration from the University of Chicago.

**Joan Costello** is a faculty associate at Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Dr. Costello, who has been with the Center since its inception as a policy research and development center in 1985, helped to formulate the concept of primary supports. She has led an effort to systematically examine these traditional community resources and to shape a coherent field of research and action. She also directed Chapin Hall's documentation of the Children, Youth, and Families Initiative, a \$30,000,000 initiative of the Chicago Community Trust. As part of this effort, Dr. Costello examined the conceptual underpinnings of primary supports focus-

ing on the importance of social support to healthy development. Dr. Costello has directed the evaluation of Youth As Resources, an initiative that encourages young people to design and carry out community service projects, and conducted several studies on the professional training and development of those who work in primary support organizations. Dr. Costello's work at the Center has also included assessments of day care and mental health needs of Illinois children and evaluations of intervention programs. She holds a Ph.D. in psychology from Illinois Institute of Technology, has held academic appointments at Yale University, The University of Chicago, The Erikson Institute, and the University of Illinois College of Medicine and has written extensively on child development and social policy.

**Jennifer Fenton**, formerly a research analyst at Chapin Hall, is currently at The After-School Corporation (TASC) in New York City gathering promising practices from TASC-funded after-school programs as a research analyst in the department of research and education policy. She received an M.A. in social science from the University of Chicago where she researched the use of the arts in defining social boundaries. At Chapin Hall, Jennifer worked with Joan Costello on a study of the conceptual underpinnings of primary supports, focusing on the importance of social support to healthy development. She also has had a life-long involvement in vocal and instrumental music.

## **Related Publications**

*Exploring the Scope of Primary Supports in an Urban Area*

Amelia Kohm, Sunil Garg

*They Still Pick Me Up When I Fall: The Role of Caring in Youth Development and Community Life*

Diana Mendley Rauner

*A Kappan Special Section on Youth and Caring*

Robert Chaskin, Diana Mendley Rauner

*Children, Families, and Communities: A New Approach to Social Services*

Joan Wynn, Joan Costello, Robert Halpern, Harold Richman

*Sports and Recreation for Chicago Youth: Existing Services, Opportunities for Improvement*

Diana Mendley Rauner

*Elegant Programs and Conversations*

Michael Spock

*Learning from Ourselves: Pivotal Stories of Museum Professionals*

Hope Jensen Leichter, Michael Spock

*A Case Study of the Tutor/Mentor Connection of Cabrini Connections*

Amelia Kohm

*I Want to Be an Engineer. . . Like You! A Review of Walgreen's One-on-One Tutoring Program*

Joan Costello

*The Role of After-School Programs in the Lives of Inner-City Children*

Robert Halpern