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Literacy and Cultural Connections

Chicago, United StatesChicago, United States
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Organization type:
nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector
Project Stage:
Scaling
Budget:
$500,000 - $1 million
Website:
http://www.changingworlds.org

SHARE

- At risk youth
- Arts & culture
- Cultural preservation
- Intercultural relations
- Education
- Tolerance
- Poverty alleviation

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

Changing Worlds is educational arts nonprofit with a mission to improve student learning, affirm identity and enhance cross-cultural understanding.

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

In a global landscape where lack of empathy leads to stereotyping, violent behaviors and lack of human connections, Changing Worlds uses the power of personal narratives with writing and the arts to build inclusive learning communities, affirm identity and build cultural and human

connections. Today, youth are exposed to violence daily and occupy classrooms where they don't feel a connection to the learning process. This is fueled by the increase in bullying and racially charged attacks. Research from John Hopkins University shows that youth who feeling a connection to school have a decrease in violent behaviors and increased academic outcomes.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

Changing Worlds will replicate its research-based LCC program regionally in low income schools and districts through interdisciplinary arts, cultural awareness and literacy residencies that improve student learning, build empathy and foster inclusive learning communities. Changing Worlds' unique curricula modules, culturally responsive pedagogy and arts-infused activities encourage cross-cultural sharing and learning, and result in visual and performing artwork. Through the power of story and art, students work cooperatively, learn from and about each other, and express themselves creatively, resulting in an environment of inclusion and imagination. Such an atmosphere is crucial for the development of empathy, as students explore a unique opportunity to access one another personally and draw connections between each other's lives, while simultaneously gaining a broader perspective through the exploration of world cultures.

Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

The program has two main components: in-classroom residencies and teacher professional development. During the 15-week residencies, students become historians, artists and community change agents by conducting interviews with family or community members to learn more about their culture, family and community histories while also exploring large themes like peace, culture and citizenship. The information gathered through the interview process is compiled and synthesized into an integrated literacy and art product. Throughout the residency, students explore the work of professional artists, learn and apply art techniques, and build cooperation and community. The inclusion of professional development ensures that classroom teachers and teaching artists alike are comfortable with the curriculum and invest personally in its use. Per school site, Changing Worlds engages teachers per grade-level cluster, starting with grades 3-5 in year one and continuing with grades 6-8 the following year. The third year of the program includes the development of school leadership teams that will build school-wide culturally responsive curricula units to guarantee the lessons and pedagogical approaches can be easily repeated in the future. The result of a three-year study demonstrated that students engaged in the program outperform their peers in cultural awareness, academic outcomes and personal connections to schools.

Sustainability

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

Changing Worlds is not alone in offering arts education programming in the Chicago area – organizations like Urban Gateways and Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education work to offer similarly-structured programs. What makes us distinctive is our emphasis on the use of personal stories to promote cross-cultural awareness and build community. In the classroom, students rarely have an opportunity to share personal stories – we seek to provide an open, inclusive space of personal storytelling and art creation. Careful not to duplicate others' efforts at the same school, we target schools without arts programming, where our programs can have the greatest possible effect.

About You

Organization:
Changing Worlds

About You

First Name

Emilie

Last Name

Shumway

Twitter URL

http://www.twitter.com/changingworlds1

Facebook URL

http://www.facebook.com/changingworlds1

About Your Organization

Organization Name

Changing Worlds

Organization Country

, IL, Chicago

Country where this project is creating social impact

, IL, Chicago

Your role in Education

Resource Officer.

The type of school(s) your solution is affiliated with

Public (tuition-free)

How long has your organization been operating?

More than 5 years

The information you provide here will be used to fill in any parts of your profile that have been left blank, such as interests, organization information, and website. No contact information will be made public. Please uncheck here if you do not want this to happen..

Innovation

How long has your solution been in operation?

Operating for more than 5 years

Now that you have thought out your entry, help us pitch it.

Define your company, program, service, or product in 1-2 short sentences [136 characters]

Changing Worlds is arts nonprofit with a mission to improve student learning, affirm identity and enhance cross-cultural understanding.

Identify what is innovative about your solution in 1-2 short sentences [136 characters]

LCC uses the power of personal stories to foster creative thinking, build positive social interaction and enhance cultural awareness.

Social Impact

What has been the impact of your solution to date?

The proposed program is an outgrowth of the organization's research-driven, three-year Literacy and Cultural Connections in-school program. In 2008, a longitudinal study was launched at three schools to measure the program's impact on students' academic and social development. After three years of consecutive program participation, data revealed that CW students consistently demonstrated higher proficiency gains in arts learning, academic achievement and self and cultural awareness than their counterparts did. Just as important, the study also found that students' interest in other cultures and development of empathetic behaviors increased, as did their appreciation for their own and others' cultures. Since its inception the program has reached over 5,000 youth in the Chicagoland area, the program aims to build on this success and replicate it regionally.

What is your projected impact over the next 1-3 years?

We expect the program to develop students on both an academic and a social emotional scale. Academically, we expect to see an improvement in reading and writing, along with – given past experience – improvement in academic test scores overall. Socially and emotionally, we expect to see students who are more aware of the struggles and challenges of others and that use the power of personal stories to be more inclusive and empathetic of others leading to less violent behaviors, more inclusive communities and a greater interest in their own and others' cultures. By the end of the third year, we expect to see schools, youth and communities changed.

What barriers might hinder the success of your project? How do you plan to overcome them?

As teachers have limited time to conduct activities between sessions, connecting key activities and goals to residency sessions is important. Therefore, classroom management and focused curriculum conception will be essential factors during professional development sessions. Given past experience, we anticipate logistical and scheduling challenges that will continue to be a work in progress. Team teaching can be tricky, so moving forward we will devote more time to planning and collaboration between classroom teachers and teaching artists to ensure the process runs smoothly. Finally, new strategies need to be developed to ensure participant consent forms are collected.

Winning entries present a strong plan for how they will achieve and track growth. Identify your six-month milestone for growing your impact

We envision new schools engaging youth and teachers in culturally responsive and arts-infused practices for over 10,000 youth.

Identify three major tasks you will have to complete to reach your six-month milestone

Task 1

Students will have begun to conduct interviews and explore other collaborative activities, developing socially.

Task 2

Half of classrooms will have begun work on a final work of art or performance to be shown in an exhibition or culminating event.

Task 3

80% of teaching artists and classroom teachers will indicate an effective and successful partnership guided by CW program staff.

Now think bigger! Identify your 12-month impact milestone

Schools will have been transformed into arts-infused learning hubs, with a blueprint for crafting arts and culture curricula.

Identify three major tasks you will have to complete to reach your 12-month milestone

Task 1

80% of students will demonstrate a greater ability to recognize individual & group similarities (using Illinois SEL Standards).

Task 2

95% of students will demonstrate their learning through an art production or performance to be presented at a school-wide event.

Task 3

75% of randomly surveyed teachers will indicate they have learned or applied new strategies into their classrooms due to LCC.

Founding Story: We want to hear about your "Aha!" moment. Share the story of where and when the founder(s) saw this solution's potential to change the world [125 words]

According to photographer Kay Berkson, Changing Worlds' founder, "The seed of this project was a comment by a Native American mother as I photographed her child. She spoke of seeing people from many countries at her daughter's school. 'I look at them and I wonder, 'where did they come from; what's their story?' but I never know. No one talks about it.' Remembering her words, I thought about immigrant and refugee families I knew who wanted to share their stories, and about the personal connections and respect I felt as a result of that sharing. I believe that for both adults and children, sharing histories, acknowledging differences, and discovering commonalities benefit the tellers, the learners, and the larger community. In today's political climate where anti-immigrant sentiment is widespread, anti-immigrant policies are sanctioned on local and national levels, and where ethnic tensions and hate violence are on the rise, these efforts are needed more than ever."

Sustainability

Tell us about your partnerships

Whenever possible, Changing Worlds partners with social service organizations that already maintain a presence at the schools with which we work. Examples include America SCORES, Children's Home and Aid Society, and SGA Youth and Family Services. These partnerships enable us to ensure that students' unique personal needs are also being met.

What type of team (staff, volunteers, etc.) will ensure that you achieve the growth milestones identified in the *Social Impact* **section? [75 words]**

The program will be guided with help and coordination from our Director of Programs, who has experience playing multiple roles in the school system, from classroom teacher to principal. Oversight for the program will be provided by Changing Worlds' Executive Director. Finally, our teaching artists are a talented group, all professional artists in their fields and with an average of 10 years' teaching experience.

Please elaborate on any needs or offers you have mentioned above and/or suggest categories of support that aren't specified within the list

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