Pop-up Play: Leading and Learning through Play

Philadelphia, United States

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Year Founded: 2014
Organization type: nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector
Project Stage: Start-Up
Budget: $1,000 - $10,000
Website: http://www.popupplay.net
Twitter: https://twitter.com/PopupPlayPhilly
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Pop-up-Play/733411266717550

Education
Play
Youth development
Youth leadership

Project Summary

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

Pop-up Play empowers young people to transform public spaces into play zones for peers or younger kids. Pop-ups range from a few hours to a full week. Youth:
• Experience a pre-designed day of play;
• Create new activities in this re-imagined space; and
• Lead and facilitate play for other kids.

WHAT IF - Inspiration: Write one sentence that describes a way that your project dares to ask, "WHAT IF?"

What if play became the vehicle for youth to develop leadership skills to transform public spaces, strengthen connections with others and become

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

Youth lack opportunities to make tangible community impact and opportunities to develop leadership skills that enable them to be effective change-agents. Adults who work with youth are often asked to create engaging activities without having the robust experience and skills needed to develop their professional practice. Pop-up Play provides flexible and engaging opportunities for youth and adults to learn and make a difference together.

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

Pop-up Play is about intergenerational play. Through play youth gain opportunities to develop their leadership skills and become change-agents in the community. In a Pop-Up day of play youth experience a day of play and then create and lead something new for others. They are able to see that it doesn't take a lot of money to make real change. Instead it takes some creativity and desire to build connections with neighbors. Staff who work with youth are part of the facilitated day of play and they too learn how to create more engaging, youth-led experiences that can shift
programming in ways that help recruit and retain young people and help them develop 21st Century skills necessary for authentic leadership.

Impact: How does it Work

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

Picture a group of 25 youth in a public park on a hot day. They experience and then re-create a field day for a group of 40 young kids who play here. Pop-up Play designs the space using minimal props, working with existing park elements like trees and tables. First, youth play in this space going through obstacle courses and playing hula-hoop ball. They debrief how they would change the field day for young kids and are charged with re-designing the space. They re-design and market their Pop-up to area kids. The youth welcome new participants and lead paper airplane races and face painting. Youth feel empowered taking tangible community action that developed community connections so youth are now ready to lead future community change.

Impact: What is the impact of the work to date? Also describe the projected future impact for the coming years.

Pop-up Play builds leadership skills for young people and models, for staff, how important it is to make play an intentional part of programs In our project youth reported that they valued the responsibility of bringing their vision to fruition. One youth noted: “it got real when people starting showing up, we simply had to make it work”. Through this invigorating experience, participants learn how to cultivate positive and meaningful experiences for community members and build various 21 Century, academic, and professional skills. Research shows that people learn through play. Dina Buchbind reports that when she works with teachers they enjoy learning through play, but then when it’s time to re-create the play they can feel uneasy. A Pop-up Play day shows staff how powerful play is for all people and they are given opportunities to practice facilitating play programming.

Spread Strategies: Moving forward, what are the main strategies for scaling impact?

Pop-Up Play offers services including: • Pop-Up Play experiences • Staff professional development; and • Consulting services to develop program-specific Pop-Up Play infrastructure. Organizations contract with us to have us host an experience for young people. By working with us to implement a Pop-Up day of play, staff will get ideas about how their program structures can shift to allow more meaningful youth leadership and to encourage play. Our primary goal is to have Pop-Up Play established in Philadelphia using our extensive networks and contacts in Out of School Time communities.

Sustainability

Financial Sustainability Plan: What is this solution’s plan to ensure financial sustainability?

We are partnering with existing youth serving organizations to sustain and grow. We capitalize on our teams’ existing organizational relationships in order to refine our program design and approach. We have created a fee structure so that programs can purchase a Pop-Up play experience, curricula and consulting. The fee-for-service structure is a sliding scale and we are building relationships with funders and sponsors.

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

Many organizations encourage play or build play environments for younger children. For example Playworks is a national organization that works in schools to build relationships and skills for young children during recess. Other organizations like Kaboom and Public Workshop create community designed play spaces. Pop-Up Play is different from many other play based organizations because it focuses on using play as the basis for building youth agency and intergenerational leadership to intentionally foster community connections and to transform public space into creative play space.

Team

Founding Story

Pop-up Play emerged after our team heard “No money, No Time and Too noisy” one too many times. We knew that to end staff reliance on hypothetical scenarios and worksheets in Out of School Time we needed to model great play programming for youth and staff. The Pop-up Play team’s core philosophy is that all people, of all ages learn through play. By re-introducing both youth and adults to play we have witnessed shifts in program design that create a place for increased engagement, authentic youth leadership and stronger, more positive relationships.

Team

Our three person, team has a combined 50 years of experience in youth development at every level from frontline to executive to board member to university faculty. Our Masters degrees are in Secondary Education, Urban Education and Organizational Leadership. Together we have: • Won national awards for high quality youth programs • Run both for and non-profit businesses; • Developed successful fundraising; and • Led extensive staff training.

About You

Organization:
Pop-up Play

First Name
Jennifer

Last Name
Brevoort

Twitter URL
https://twitter.com/JenBrevoort

Facebook URL
About Your Project

Organization Name
Pop-up Play

How long has your organization been operating?

Project

Organization Country
 , PA, Philadelphia

Country where this project is creating social impact
 , PA, Philadelphia

What awards or honors has the project received?

Funding: How is your project financial supported?
Friends and family, Individuals, Customers, Other.

Supplemental

Awards

Primary Target Age Group
3 - 5, 6 - 12, 13 - 17, 18 - 35, 35+.

Your role in Education
Administrator, After-School Provider, Teacher, Other.

Please specify which of the following best applies:
Other.

The type of school(s) your solution is affiliated with (if applicable)
None.

Intervention Focus
Extracurricular, Professional Development, Community, Products or Services.

Does your project utilize any of the innovative design principles below?
Putting Children in Charge: Giving children a voice and cultivating agency via experiential learning, project-based learning, and civic engagement.

Is your project targeted at solving any of the following key barriers?
One size fits all fits none: Students are disengaged and not being prepared for “real life.”

Need
We are interested in finding specific partners interested in working with Pop-up Play in your community.

Offer
We can support your staff development goals and work to align our programs to launch new partnerships.

What key learning outcomes does your work seek to improve?
This program is designed to ensure that youth participate in tangible activities that enable them to use their intrinsic knowledge and new skills to build community through play. After fully participating in a Pop-up Play experience, youth will be able to demonstrate mastery of the following 21st Century skills: collaboration, teamwork, leadership, flexibility, initiative and critical thinking. Subsequently, we will use the Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets to clearly identify youth strengths and goals. We will assess participants’ growth in personal and social capital accordingly.

PROGRAM DESIGN CLARITY: We are hungry to know more about what exactly your model consists of. Please succinctly list a) what main activities are you doing with your beneficiaries, b) where you carry out the activities? c) how often? d) for how many hours? e) who delivers the services? and f) any other brief details

A. We create field day events that youth experience, then re-imagine, re-create and lead for younger children. Participants receive take home materials to support continued learning and interest in community action. These immersive experiences are coupled with blended learning coursework for educators. Courses and coaching focus on how learning through play engages youth in learning and leading. B. Events take place in public spaces. C. We are contracted by out of school time programs, schools and festivals. Events, training and festivals take place year-round on demand. D. Events last 5-6 hours and are supplemented with a blended learning course for educators to ensure shifts in program design. E. Program services are delivered by our three founders, skilled volunteers and the youth leaders. F. We spark the redesign of programs, engagement in learning and growth of youth leadership.

INSPIRATION: What do you consider the most important trends or evidence that inspire you to believe the world is ready to Re-imagine Learning? Please elaborate.

The world is ready to Re-imagine learning because the concept of 21st Century Skill building is sticking with stakeholders. There has been a re-
emergence of play-based strategies to help all people unleash their intrinsic knowledge and grapple with new information while interacting with others to promote positive citizenship and innovation. Learning through play is accepted in the early grades and it is both our challenge and inspiration to ensure that older youth and adult learners recognize that all ages benefit from play.

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY: What does “learning through play” mean to you and why it is a must-have, instead of a nice to have?

Learning through play equals discovery and engagement. Play facilitates opportunities for young people to build empathy and connection with one another. Learning through play helps people to be fearless, consider multiple points of view and raises aspirations. Play is a must-have because it is the ultimate motivator at all ages. Play is the most effective strategy for engaging youth with multiple learning styles, diverse interests and varying abilities. A youth-led playful environment creates space for young people to explore their full leadership and creative potential.

SUSTAINABILITY: Please list a quick breakdown of your funding, indicating the percentage that comes from each source.

100% of Pop-up Play’s funding comes from fee-for-service contracts. Our goal is that income will come from contracts, foundations, and sponsors. We are working with University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School to develop a sustainable pricing strategy and are in talks with several funders.

MODEL: How does your mission relate to your business model (i.e. Non-profit, for-profit or hybrid)?

We have a hybrid business model. Our fee structure has a sliding scale payment structure because we value working with programs that target under-served young people. Our team also believes that there is an accountability that comes with having organizations pay for services and that a blended for-profit/non-profit approach along with frequent evaluation will ensure that we are providing superior programming.

FUNDING PRIORITIES: If your organization were given $20K in unrestricted funding today, how would you use it? Why?

We would launch a citywide festival of play. A festival and its supporting professional development would create a network of educators interested in re-imagining learning, introduce communities to the power of play and enhance the leadership skills of the 100+ youth facilitating the festival.

PARTNERSHIPS: Tell us about your partnerships that enhance your approach.

Pop-up Play is equipping staff with skills to support young people as they design playful learning environments. Partners include: Universities (Drexel and Penn) for their extensive access to the School District of Philadelphia, Out of School Time orgs where we shift program design, Philly Parks and Rec for public play space and scale and schools like the Creative City Charter School to develop play-based rituals enhancing school culture.

COLLABORATIONS: Have you considered or initiated partnerships with any of the other Challenge Pacesetters? If so, please share.

We have 20+ new contacts and developed partnerships with 4 Pacesetters: Philadelphia Wooden Boat Factory and The Imagination Foundation (creating Pop-up Play events), C.R.E.A.T.E Lab East Stroudsburg (Course development), and Creative Classrooms through Empowered Teachers (Professional Development)

VISION: If you had unlimited funding, and you could fast forward 15 years to when your program has been able to achieve wild success - what will it have achieved?

It is 2025, we have made play a prioritized learning strategy for youth k-HS and adults. Pop-up play is a national program that supports citywide Festivals of Play where young people facilitate the transformation of parks, and vacant lots into temporary found object play spaces. Educators learn from our accredited blended learning courses on program design and we support teams of youth leaders who run summer camps and one day Pop-up play days.

IMPACT - KEY METRICS: Please list the key data points that you would cite as evidence that you are able to achieve lasting learning outcomes. Please also share one data point for which you most hope to see better results over time

A recent evaluation was conducted on 8/2014 and data collection is ongoing. We assert that play influences people’s ability to learn by activating engagement, and building 21st C. Skills. Key metrics are satisfaction (fun), participants’ recreating and leading activities and staff feedback. 100% of staff committed to using more play in programs and all youth reported that they had fun while 93% increased leadership skills.

IMPACT - REPORTING SAMPLE: Please attach any examples of your impact reporting. [optional]:

august_2014_evaluation_data.pdf

RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE: Please link or attach any research or evidence resource you are open to sharing more widely [optional].

Building research and evidence is a key aim of this initiative, and the resources you share may be chosen for listing in the Center for Education Innovations library:

SOURCE: If applicable - who created the research or evidence you are choosing to share?:

IMPACT - REACH: How many people did your project directly engage in programmatic activities in the last year?

Not Applicable - yet! (we are at the idea stage or start-up)

STUDY: Has an external evaluation or study been conducted of your organization?

No

Other (please specify)

Number of Employees:

Fewer than 10

Number of Volunteers:

Fewer than 10

APPROACHES: Given the complexity of play, it is not surprising that there have been numerous research attempts to categorize the different types and approaches! Please indicate which of the following your project focuses on.

Physical Play, Creating a Supportive Socio-Emotional Environment, Providing a Range of Opportunities (providing the equipment and materials needed for various types of play), Educational Structuring (developing playful projects within educational contexts), Challenging Play (play that disrupts - where rules are disregarded and levels of imagination are high).

Other (please specify)

Play as empowerment... youth find that they have an expertise (knowledge of play) and can use it to change their community.
AFFILIATION: Please specify if your organization has any existing affiliations with the LEGO Group.

No Affiliation

Source URL: https://www.changemakers.com/play2learn/entries/pop-play