MUSEUM MY SPACE:
A Case Study on Engaging Teens for Participation in the Art Museums

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Masters of Arts in Teaching Program, ED5070B Thesis

April 2008

A thesis submitted to the Corcoran College of Art + Design in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Teaching.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation to my thesis committee for their dedication and support of this topic. In particular, I would like to thank my thesis advisor, A.T. Stephens, for his unlimited patience and perspective throughout the process. I am sincerely grateful to Dr. Annie Storr, Selila Honing, and the other members of my committee for presenting challenging questions that brought more meaning and depth to the topic. Finally, this thesis would not have been possible without the museum professionals who provided their time and insight on the subject of teen programs and museums.

I dedicate this thesis to Mario and Carol Pasquini for instilling the joy of learning and art in my life.
Laura Pasquini

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Abstract

This thesis investigated how art museums have successfully engaged teens for participation through out-of-school time programs. A review of literature focused on a foundation of relevant topics including the challenges and incentives for teen involvement outside of the school day, how museums came to serve teen audiences and the benefits linked to youth development and museum learning.

Data was collected over a four-month period in the form of multiple case design to understand a broader pattern and key strategies implemented across four different art museums. Qualitative research was conducted in the form of interviews with key participants, an in-depth literature review and a document analysis of materials created by the teens themselves.

Five key themes emerged during data collection. The themes were: Involve Teens in Program Design and Planning, Promote Socialization with Peers and Adults, Fulfill External Requirements, Introduce New Skills, Evaluate Regularly.

The findings suggested that museum teen programs that succeed in engaging teens are conscientious about both their developmental needs and their practical interests. They also empower teens to make decisions on multiple levels while providing a clear, transparent structure. Ultimately, this research sought to understand a framework of characteristics that best serve teen audiences and can be applied to current or future models.
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I. Introduction

Problem Statement

Teens are one the fastest growing populations in the United States. Generation “Y”, also known as, the Millennial Generation, Echo Boomers, and Generation “Net” include Americans born between the years 1977 to 1994. This group, age 13 to 30 in 2007, numbers approximately 73 million individuals and is the second-largest generation since the Baby Boom. This population will grow substantially to include 35 million teens over the next decade. (Plotz 1; New Strategist Publications 1)

Historically, museums have overlooked teen audiences, focusing instead on educational and enrichment programs for adult and school-aged children. Interestingly, it is not until the late 1970’s that museums introduce teens into their diorama of educational initiatives. This shift can be attributed to several influential movements that affected their public role including AAM’s Museums for a New Century, a report which challenged museums to reach new, traditionally underserved audiences and to think of themselves not as institutions separate from their communities, but as organizations designed for civic engagement. At the time, teens were one of the most underrepresented of museum audiences.

Many museums have recognized the need to address this gap by designing out-of school time programs and activities specifically targeted to high-school age youth. As a result,
the past decade has seen a surge of museum teen program initiatives. Unfortunately, such programs have been short-lived as a result of unsatisfactory outcomes such as funding, low retention rates and uneven attendance. Like so many out-of-school time providers experience, the biggest challenge next to funding has been to engage teens for participation. Drop off in attendance is seen early on in many of these well-intended programs.

Teens in the 21st century have a different set of needs and interests than their predecessors. In order to effectively engage teens for participation in the museum, teen programs must reflect what is most important to this specialized audience. Engaging teens for participation involves providing experiences that capture their needs and interests over an extended period of time. But how do we achieve this goal? Answering this question proves to be a difficult challenge for many cultural and community-based organizations offering teen programs. “In one study of several Boys and Girls Clubs in America, a significant proportion of teens stated a lack of interesting activities kept them from participating more often. This phenomenon is all too common with most programs experiencing attrition of 20% to 40% of their registered students early in the year” (Herrera and Arbreton 36-39).

Needs and Rationale

Several in-depth studies have revealed that museums are uniquely positioned to provide informal learning opportunities that promote positive adolescent and youth development outcomes. Even more, when teens participate in out-of-school time museum programs
over an extended period of time, outcomes reveal higher rates of youth confidence, social skills, study habits and school attendance.

Developmentally, teens strive to understand themselves and the world around them through difficult periods of social and individual growth. Erikson argued that “regardless of culture, economic status, race, ethnicity, or even geography, the journey through the years between childhood and adulthood is characterized by a series of well-documented physical, psychosocial, and cognitive changes” (Beane 4). During this stage in a young person’s development, it is common for difficult questions to arise related to personal identity, sexuality, gender and independence. Noted behavioral psychologist Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) refers to this period of teen adolescence as a journey to self-actualization” (Levine 13).

Art is of particular importance to teen development because it can provide them with a safe, yet open-ended platform to learn about themselves and the world around them. In a recent report published by the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities and the Arts Education Partnership, researchers concluded, “engagement in the arts nurtures the development of cognitive, social and personal competencies. Arts programs can increase academic achievement, help decrease youth involvement in delinquent behavior and improve youth attitudes about themselves and the future” (How the Arts Can Enhance After-School Programs).
Purpose of Research

This case study explores some of the key issues that influence teens’ out-of-school time activities. The purpose of this research is to examine effective program characteristics and strategies that engage the interest and participation of high school age youth in art museums over a period of time. The study looks closely at four art museums that have successfully engaged teens for participation through extended learning programs outside of the school day. Findings expand upon seven key areas that are grounded in developmental outcomes and meet the practical needs of today’s teens. The purpose of this study is to expand knowledge base in the subject area of teen museum programs, raise awareness about the needs and interests of today’s teens and provide a guide for current and future programs.

Selection Criteria

Museums for this study were selected based on their long-standing relationship and experienced success with teen audiences, resulting in three out of the four programs having a lifespan of ten-plus years and all having a high-level rate of retention. In addition, this study focused specifically on the use of art as a tool for engaging teens in the mid to late stage of adolescence; and thereby, art museums serving high-school aged youth were selected as the primary target for the sample population.

Finally, while there is no module for teen museum programs, selection criteria was influenced by recent research from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) which suggests that out-of-school time programs for teens are most successful when they
offer a balance of youth development initiatives while fulfilling some type of external requirement or incentive such as paid employment, service learning or skill-based instruction (Engaging America’s Youth 9).

This research includes a comparative analysis of each program’s characteristics and concludes with five key findings that effectively engage teens for participation in museum out-of-school programs.

Essential Questions that have guided this research include:

- What are the developmental and practical needs of today’s teens in America?
- Why is it important for art museums in particular to serve teens?
- What can art museums and teens provide one another?
- What patterns evolve from the selected programs and what can we learn from these patterns?
- What are the most important lessons learned in design and implementation of the subject programs?
- How can art museums employ better strategies for engagement for teens?
II. Literature Review

The Evolution of Museum Teen Programs

Historically, museums have overlooked teen audiences, focusing instead on educational and enrichment programs for adult and school-aged children. Interestingly, it is not until the late 1970’s that museums introduce teens into their diorama of educational initiatives. It is not until the past forty years that teens enter the literature as a target museum audience, and then in the last fifteen years, when museums begin to grow their specialized programs specifically for high-school aged youth. This literature review begins with a brief exploration of the historical shifts that led up to the practice of museum teen programs in the United States; moves on to explore the benefits and challenges of working with teens in the museum; and concludes with current trends in the field.

In North America, the expansion of public museums blossomed at the latter half of the nineteenth century during the industrial era. “As industrialization progressed, populations moved to the cities, and science and industry reshaped life, governments also increasingly took responsibility for social services and education. Museums were viewed as one type of several that could provide education for the masses” (Hein 3). However, even though many early museums concerned themselves with serving the public through educational
In the early 1980s, the American Association of Museums (AAM) established a commission to study and clarify the role of museums in American society. Their report, *Museums for a New Century* identified sixteen major areas where museums could better improve overall. Three areas of conclusion were that “museums have not realized their full potential as educational institutions; museum education should be integrated throughout the entire organization; and more collaboration is needed between museums and cultural and educational institutions” (Weller 148). AAM later established a task force to write the first major report on the educational role of museums. In 1992, *Excellence and Equity* provided the museum world with an “expanded definition of museum’s educational role” and stated that the “missions of museums should state unequivocally that there is an educational purpose in every museum activity” (AAM, Excellence and Equity 3). The task force brought attention to the important topic of social
inclusion asking, “How can museums, which have so much to contribute to the collective human experience, welcome the broad spectrum of our society?” and “How can they use the abundance of their collections and their scholarly resources to enrich and empower citizens from all backgrounds?” (6). In short, as social responsible institutions, it was concluded that museums entering the 21st century must do everything possible to be inclusive to all audiences, and provide meaningful learning experiences aimed at the diverse nature of their public.

At about the same time as the Tax Reform Act of 1969, out-of-school time programming appeared as an issue of national concern resulting in new federal funding initiatives. The term “out-of-school time”, as defined by the National Institute on Out-of School Time (NIOST), encompasses "a wide range of program offerings for young people that take place before school, after school, on weekends, and during the summer and other school breaks" (NIOST). Researcher Patricia Seppanen outlined four demographic shifts that affected and continue to influence the rising number of students in need of out-of school time opportunities in the United States. 1) Growth in the number of young children as the Baby Boom cohort has begun to reproduce; 2) A sharp increase in the employment of mothers with young children; 3) An increase in the proportion of single-parent families; 4) A decrease in the number of extended family members available locally to care for school-age children during non school hours (qtd. in Fager 6). The majority of out-of-school time programs were formed for young people, less than twelve years of age, who required the care of an adult. However, it did not take long before youth statistics peaked in the areas of teen pregnancy, gang involvement, addiction to drugs and alcohol and violence, particularly in urban areas where teens were most susceptible to these
influences. Considering the fragile age of adolescent and teenage years, teen out-of-school time programs were originally formed as a reaction to these grim statistics. ‘Prevention programs’ as they were commonly referred to, offered teens a positive alternative to idle hours spent outside of school. Formed by schools, cultural and social service agencies such as 4-H clubs and Boys and Girls Clubs of America, these programs provided services ranging from extracurricular enrichment and homework assistance to special interest activities such as athletics, science and art.

*Museums and Youth Development*

In the 1970s, museums joined the growing landscape of cultural agencies to offer out-of-school time programs for teens. In 1979, the Brooklyn Museum of Art published the first study, appropriately titled, “Teenagers’ Attitudes about Art Museums”, to look at high-school students and their thoughts on learning in the museum. The study combined research on then current teen programs offered by major art museums in North America as well as feedback from a youth advisory council comprised of high-school students from diverse backgrounds and areas of the city. The study found that museum teen programs could be linked to positive personal development and increased academic achievement because of their experiential approach to learning. Additionally, the research noted the importance of creating a strong distinction between the formal learning environment of schools and that of museums, emphasizing that “museum programs should distinguish themselves from school programs in order to engage participants in the program’s context.” (Andrews and Asia 228).
In the years after the Brooklyn Museum of Art’s visionary study and the establishment of their first teen program, several substantial studies followed that supported their findings. Interestingly, these studies also revealed that museums could offer an unparalleled experience for teens and their development above that of other types of community agencies and museums could provide the ideal environment, distinctive from the school setting, needed to nurture these experiences.

Between 1991 and 1999, the Association of Science-Technology Centers produced a nation-wide program called Youth ALIVE! (Youth Achievement through Learning, Involvement, Volunteering, and Employment) which served over 7,000 teen participants. Youth ALIVE! provided financial support and professional development for a network of over 60 science centers and youth museums that were, and in many cases continue to be, engaged in providing enrichment and employment opportunities for adolescent youth and teens. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development whose research helped establish a strong link between the positive role of out-of-school time programs and adolescent development influenced the initiative. Ongoing evaluation of the program found that participants benefited from measurable outcomes including “increased social competency, intellectual development and knowledge of the world of work” (ASTC, Youth Programs, Youth ALIVE!). In addition, the program demonstrated that “museums and science centers are ideal places for youth programs because they combine three fundamental elements for healthy youth development: varied, substantial intellectual resources; a positive peer environment; and caring adults who can make a difference in young people's lives.” (ASTC, Youth Programs, Youth ALIVE!)
Soon after the ASTC released their findings, the James Irvine Foundation developed a four-year study called the Museum Youth Initiative (MYI). Beginning in the year 2000, the Museum Youth Initiative supported ten museums in California “in an effort to determine whether developing and delivering educational programs after school in cultural institutions could make difference in how youth learn. Key findings indicated that when youth were engaged in these programs, their critical thinking and study skills improved, as did their school attendance and overall school performance” (IMLS, Engaging America’s Youth 15). This study was significant because it looked at museums as unique out-of-school time agencies that could teach youth how to learn over what to learn. Janice Lyle of the Palm Springs Art Museum, a participant of the Museum Youth Initiative, summarized the benefits of informal learning experiences for teens in her own words:

“In the end, we felt the value we brought was not in the focus on the curriculum. We felt the creativity and emphasis on unstructured learning and how that enhances one’s life that was the long-term benefit for students that we valued. Our informal learning approach emphasized “understanding decision-making; the role that young people could play in their community; the fact that outside the school there were adults who valued their opinions; and the idea that they could take risks and try new things. These programs can help you integrate youth into the fabric of museum life. That has forever changed us.”

(James Irvine Foundation, Museums After School 7)

The groundbreaking work of the YouthALIVE! program along with research by the Irvine Foundation and the Institute of Museums and Library Services proved that museums could bring “unique assets to youth development” because of their ability to distinguish themselves as informal learning environments aimed at the development of the whole person (IMLS, Engaging America’s Youth 8). At the same time, they demonstrated that teens had a lot to offer in return. These studies dispelled popular
media’s portrait of the troubled teen, and instead, upheld them as “competent citizens capable of meaningful participation” (Checkoway et. al 298) and cultural exchange.

*Current Trends*

Currently, and perhaps as a result of the studies previously mentioned, there has been a surge in museum teen, after-school programs across the country. Art museums, in particular, have more than tripled their teen initiatives in the past decade. In 2003, an online survey was publicized through the Museum-Ed listserv to collect data on the principal types of programs currently undertaken by museums and their education departments. Eighty-five art museums across the U.S. participated and included a broad range of institutions comprised of anywhere from one to seventy education staff members. The survey results cited that 55.29% of the participating art museums offered specialized programs for teen audiences.

The Irvine Foundation attributes the increase in museum out-of-school time programs to two growing trends. These include the rising capacity of museums to design and deliver high-quality education programs and the growing recognition by education experts and reformers on the importance of out-of-school time programs. (James Irvine Foundation, *Museums After School* 2) It should be added that current population trends might also be contributing to this growth. Generation “Y”, also known as, the Millennial Generation, Echo Boomers, and Generation “Net” include Americans born between the years 1977 to 1994. This group, age 13 to 30 in 2007, numbers approximately 73 million individuals and is the second-largest generation since the Baby Boom. This population will grow
substantially to include 35 million teens over the next decade (Plotz 1, *The Millennials*
1).

*Challenges*

Despite the growing interest to serve teens outside of the school day, high school students continue to be one of the most challenging audiences to reach and engage over an extended period of time. Many teen out-of-school programs have been short-lived, resulting in unsatisfactory outcomes such as high attrition rates and uneven attendance. Engaging teens for participation has proved to be a difficult challenge for many cultural and community-based organizations alike, and yet “there is little information, especially for youth at risk, about the factors that contribute to getting youth ‘in the door’ and keeping them engaged—a critical missing link in our understanding of participation and its association to outcomes” (Harvard Family Research Project, Predictors of Participation 1). Researchers at the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) have dedicated the past several years to understanding the gap between teen participation and out-of-school time programs. They attribute several common challenges outside of academic demands to this growing trend: 1) a desire to relax and hang out with friends after school; 2) the need for work or paid employment; 3) family responsibilities; 4) boredom or disinterest; and 5) transportation/safety. (HFRP, Moving Beyond the Barriers 2)

In order to engage high school audiences, museums as well as other out-of-school time providers must be able to provide programs grounded in developmental outcomes, but
also offer practical incentives related to the needs of today’s teens. Hall et al. addresses the importance of this duality by explaining, “programs for high school age youth that have intensely infused 21st century learning tools into the curriculum are less common than programs that focus on behavioral adjustments or broader developmental outcomes. Ideally, in order to respond to the full spectrum of needs of today’s high school youth, program providers will need to craft programs that creatively balance both” (Hall, Israel, and Shortt 11)

In 2007, The Institute of Museum and Library Services published the findings of a yearlong study of nearly 400 museum and library programs that served youth aged 9-19. The studies supports Hall in his summation that, in order to effectively increase teen participation, programs should “use an approach supported by the youth development research literature” and meet practical needs by “employing, publicly recognizing, and/or including other incentives for participants” (Engaging America’s Youth 9)

Art and Teen Development

Developmentally, teens strive to understand themselves and the world around them through difficult periods of social and individual growth. Erikson argued “regardless of culture, economic status, race, ethnicity, or even geography, the journey through the years between childhood and adulthood is characterized by a series of well-documented physical, psychosocial, and cognitive changes” (Beane 4). During this stage in a young person’s development, it is common for difficult questions to arise related to personal identity, sexuality, gender and independence. Noted behavioral psychologist Abraham
Maslow (1908-1970) refers to the period of teen adolescence as a journey to self-actualization” (Levine 13)

Art is of particular importance to teen development because it can provide teens with safe, yet open-ended platform to learn about themselves and the world around them. In a recent report published by the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities and the Arts Education Partnership, researchers concluded, “engagement in the arts nurtures the development of cognitive, social and personal competencies. Arts programs can increase academic achievement, help decrease youth involvement in delinquent behavior and improve youth attitudes about themselves and the future” (Champions of Change).

This case study looks specifically at the leading work of four art museums for their ability to address both the practical and developmental needs of today’s teens within a 21st century framework. The Walker Art Center, The Andy Warhol Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art were selected based on their long-standing work with teen audiences as well as their ability to engage them over an extended period of time. The study will begin with a close examination of programs themselves and conclude with a cross comparison study on key characteristics they have in common.

Summary

The combination of the Tax Reform Act and the AAM mobilized museums to create programmatic avenues to reach non-traditional, underserved audiences, especially
through collaborations with social and cultural agencies. Far more important, these changes allowed museums to consider their public roles within a broader social and cultural context.

Evidence has suggested that museums programs, when designed effectively, can bring “unique assets to youth development which include dedicated, knowledgeable staff; authentic objects, artifacts, and information resources; opportunities for personalized, hands-on learning and support for cognitive and social development” (Engaging America’s Youth 8). These programs can offer valuable learning experiences that are distinct from the formal school environment. Many museums, particularly art museums, are embracing the unique role they have to play in the out-of-school time arena by increasing their efforts with teen audiences.

However, teens do not freely offer their time and participation. Today’s teens are complex individuals that require museum professionals to think outside of the traditional realm of programming for school-aged audiences. While struggling with the internal changes of adolescent development, teens must also be conscientious about external demands that affect their time management decisions. In order for museums to genuinely engage teens for participation, they must be able to craft specialized programs that meet a myriad of needs. The selected art museums in this study have reported high participation levels and involvement among their teen audiences. What can we learn from these museums and how can we apply that knowledge to the future design of teen programs?
III. Methodology

Yin defines the case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin 23). Datta further expanded this definition to include six distinct types of case studies including program effect, which aims to determine the impact of programs and provide inference about reasons for success or failure (n/a). Using program effect case study methodology, this research will focus on characteristics employed by art museums to engage teens for participation in out-of-school time programs. Rather than researching a singular program, this study uses multiple case design (Yin 20) to understand a broader pattern and key strategies implemented across four different art museums.

Criteria

Museums for this study were selected based on their long-standing relationship and experienced success with teen participation, resulting in three out of the four programs having a lifespan of ten-plus years and all having a high-level rate of attrition. I have made the assumption that this sustained history along with teen participation levels is indication of their ability to understand and skillfully meet the needs of this audience over a period of time. In addition, this study focused specifically on the use of art as a tool for engaging teens in the mid to late stage of adolescence; and thereby, art museums serving
high-school aged youth were selected as the primary target for the sample population.

There is currently no model for museum teen programs, or an exemplar of program characteristics. The closest module is provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) whose research findings suggest that out-of-school time programs for teens are most successful when they offer a balance of youth development initiatives while fulfilling some type of external requirement or incentive such as paid employment, service learning or skill-based instruction over an extended period of time. Such research has provided a guide, not a predetermined structure for the selection of the case study sample. Strauss and Corbin note that while literature-based codes or criteria from outside research can provide a useful tool, they can impede the development of new ideas (8); and therefore, data findings were inductive based on comparative analysis of patterns that emerged from the sample.

Data Collection

This research is largely based on three methods of data collection: interviews with key participants, an in-depth literature review and a document analysis of materials created by the teens themselves (websites, blogs, pod casts, printed zines, posters, etc).

Interviews were semi-structured to allow for flexibility and ongoing questions. This type of interview was best suited for this research because it allowed participants to respond to open-ended questions within a flexible framework and it encouraged depth and vitality, allowing for new concepts to emerge (Dearnley 19-28).
Museum teen program coordinators or directors were selected as the key participants for the interviews. The responsibilities of teen program coordinators or program directors vary from museum to museum. Typically, they oversee the organization and administration of an existing program, and in some cases, the overall direction and development of new program initiatives. Depending on the organizational structure of a museum, they may inform the philosophical framework or curriculum of the program, and most important, have direct contact with the teen participants over an extended period of time. For the purposes of this research, I have made the assumption that these key staff members can provide a comprehensive background on their museum’s teen programs and insight into day-to-day practices. Participating staff members were first identified through Internet research, published articles, and guidance from thesis advisors.

Once a staff member was identified for participation in an interview, a formal email was sent to describe the study in more detail. If he or she agreed to be interviewed, a follow up email was sent with a list of research questions. Interviews were recorded by phone, and consent to participate was recorded at the onset of the call. This process followed the protocol requirements of the Corcoran College of Art + Design and was approved before any interview activity began.

Each interview consisted of questions regarding the museum and its programmatic approach to teen audiences. The initial questions were intended to provide insight into
key strategies for teen involvement and participation. Participants were encouraged to expand upon various questions and each interview took its own course while following the original set of research questions. Questions were designed to help compare key strategies and program characteristics of each museum teen program in order to identify patterns, differences and commonalities. Key areas of concentration included the following:

1. Teen Involvement – Are the teens involved in the program design?
2. External Requirements - Does the program fulfill outside requirements/incentives?
3. Social networking - How do these museums support a broader teen network?
4. Valuable Skills – What skills do teens find valuable and does the program provide these skills?
5. Adult mentor(s) – What is the role of the museum education staff or teaching artist in relationship to the teens?
6. Evaluation-How is the program evaluated or measured?

The time of the interviews was based on the availability of the participants. All interviewees were adults in full-time, salaried positions at the respective museum. A total of two/three individuals were interviewed between the months of December and March 2008. The median duration of the interview was 30 minutes in all cases. All participants were interviewed with Skype, an Internet based phone service, and Call Recorder, a digital recording software program.

Data Analysis

This case study used cross-site analysis to identify patterns and common themes across the select programs. Miles and Huberman defined cross-site analysis as a process of interrelating findings from several contexts to generate themes, which may be used to develop new theory (in La Pierre and Zimmerman 48). Stokrocki, as adapted from Bogdan and Biklen, outlined the following steps entailed in cross-site analysis: 1) start to
gather information, 2) search for major issues or patterns in the information that becomes the central categories, 3) look for several examples of these categories, 4) describe and explain these categories, while looking for new ones, 5) interrelate social processes to develop an evolving model, and 6) employ sampling and coding devices to focus the analysis on the central categories (50).

Limitations

Geographical challenges and travel limitations narrowed the program selection to art museums in the North and Northeastern United States.
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IV. The Programs

Walker Art Center Teen Arts Council (WACTAC): The Walker Art Center  
Youth Publications and Youth Invasion: The Andy Warhol Museum  
Youth Insights: The Whitney Museum of American Art  
MoMA Youth Advisory Council, Redstudio Teen Podcast: The Museum of Modern Art

Museum: The Walker Art Center  
Program Name: The Walker Art Center Teen Arts Council (WACTAC)  
Year start/end: 1994-present  
Program Type: after school program, student stipend available ($60/month)  
Qualifications: high school students, ages 14-18 from Minneapolis/St. Paul  
Capacity: 12 students per year  
Duration: every Thursday, from 4:30 to 6 pm, September through July  
Retention Rate: High, 1-2 student drop-off rate per year

The Walker was established in 1927 as the first public art gallery in the Upper Midwest. Today it identifies itself as a “singular 21st-century model of a multidisciplinary arts organization”. As a contemporary museum of visual and performing art, the Walker “examines the questions that shape and inspire people as individuals, cultures, and communities” by being a “catalyst for the creative expression of artists and the active engagement of audiences” (The Walker Art Center). Over the past 10 years, the Walker has deepened its connections between artists and audiences and defined a new model for a 21st-century cultural institution with vital support from the Wallace Foundation. In 1994 the museum established an institution-wide project called “New Definitions/New Audiences,” which allowed them to expand the accessibility of their collection for new as well as traditional audiences.
As a result, the Walker formed their first teen initiative, Walker Art Center Teen Arts Council or WACTAC in 1994, which eventually led to their success as a leading model and innovator for teen programming. Previously, the museum reported to having an almost nonexistent teen audience. Today, their visitorship has exceeded 70,000 teens per year, a number that represents 11% of their total audience (Schwartz).

WACTAC is the centerpiece of the Walker Teen Program. It is comprised of diverse group of 12 young people who meet weekly to design, organize, and market events and programs for other teenagers and young adults. The council uses Walker exhibitions, films, or performances as inspiration, to design a variety of related programs with the goal of connecting teenagers to contemporary art and artists. In the past, these programs have included film showcases, art exhibitions, poetry slams and hip-hop battles. There are ‘staple programs’ that have evolved from WACTAC including: Girls in the Direct’s Chair, an annual film festival for young women; Hot Art Injection, a multidisciplinary teen art exhibition; and Below the Belt, a series of competitive battles in 12 different performing art disciplines for ages 20 and under.

Museum: The Andy Warhol Museum  
Program Name: Youth Publications  
Year start/end: 1997-present  
Program Type: paid-employment, after school program  
Qualifications: High School students, ages 14-18 from Pittsburg area  
Capacity: 15-30 students per year  
Duration: 3 days a week, 3 hours each day, October-May  
Retention Rate: 95%, or 1-2 student drop-off rate per year (due to schedule conflicts)
The Andy Warhol Museum defines their mission as “a vital forum in which diverse audiences of artists, scholars and the general public are galvanized through creative interaction with the art and life of Andy Warhol” (The Andy Warhol Museum). Andy Warhol was notorious for his ability to challenge and question popular culture. His art blurred the lines between commercial and fine art and mockingly addressed the irony of the American media machine. As a contemporary art museum, the Warhol Museum continues his legacy by “constantly re-defining itself in relation to contemporary life, using its unique collections and dynamic, interactive programming as tools” (The Andy Warhol Museum).

Only a few years after it was founded in 1994, the Warhol Museum established a program for high school students called Youth Interview. The program, which still exists today as Youth Publications, enables teens to gain technical and critical thinking skills using contemporary art as a forum to engage in dialogue about topics of interest. Funded primarily by YouthWorks, the museum hires 15 area high school students, ages 14-18, and trains them in digital and traditional publishing skills on-site with education staff. As a result, the teens create an annual publication called Urban Interview, a magazine inspired by Andy Warhol and his art. In the past two years, students have also learned how to make hand-made magazines, silk-screens, web pages and pod casts. Teens meet for a total of 3 days per week, 3 hours each day from October to May.

In addition to Youth Publications, the teens meet regularly to plan and coordinate Youth Invasion, an annual teen event at the Warhol Museum. The evening includes music, food, games, art activities, a teen art exhibition, and the fashion show. Youth Invasion is
attended by hundreds of high school students from the Pittsburgh area. The program is an opportunity for young artists to show their work in an internationally respected museum, and get to know creative young people from other schools. In addition, the Warhol Museum supports exhibiting teen artists by providing “Art Minigrants” to fund supplies and a mentor to aid in the creation process.

Program Name: Youth Insights  
Year start/end: 1997-present  
Program Type: paid-employment, out-of-school time program ($7/hr + $4 ea. session for roundtrip subway fare)  
Qualifications: 16 high school students  
Capacity: 16-20, high school students from New York City  
Duration: every Tuesday 4-6 pm, and Saturday, 10 am-2 pm, September through June, Monday through Friday from 10 am-4 pm, July  
Retention Rate:

The Whitney Museum was founded in 1931 out of the personal collection of founder Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney. Today, it is home to one of the most comprehensive collections of twentieth-century American Art in the world. The Whitney’s education department was established in 1966, in an effort to “explore new approaches to education for all age groups and to develop interdisciplinary, multidimensional programs and materials” (The Whitney Museum of American Art). Part of the founding vision of education at the Whitney was, and still is, to reach multiple audiences with a wide range of interests and needs.

Youth Insights (YI), the Whitney’s leading teen program, began in 1997 as a paid, after-school program. It now operates year-long and provides teens with essential critical thinking and communication skills so that they can engage the public on the subject of
contemporary art and culture using the museum’s collections as a framework. *Youth Insights* teens are asked to lead interactive tours, conduct dialogues with artists, and engage in discussions with teens, families, and senior citizens.

Approximately 16-20 high-school students from New York City participate in *Youth Insights* every year. The program is organized around three main components:

**Artist in Residence**
Each semester, participants learn new skills during regular meetings with a contemporary artist. The Artist in Residence joins in heated debates in the galleries and inspires YI members in creating an original project of their own.

**The Artists Museum**
As a museum dedicated to living, working artists, YI participants meet with staff members from various museum departments and examine the inner workings of the Whitney and the role of museums in contemporary society.

**Contemporary Community**
Participants create and organize opportunities to expand the Museum’s community. Engaging in discussion and hands-on activities with New York City community groups, YI members share their expanding understanding of contemporary art and culture.

Youth Insights teens come from diverse backgrounds, yet share a committed interest in the arts. As teens engage with artists, museum staff, and visitors, they assume an active role in defining the art world. (The Whitney Museum of American Art)

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Museum: The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)
Program Name: *MoMA Youth Advisory Council (YAC), Red Studio Audio Program*
Year start/end: 2006-
Program Type: after school
Qualifications: 10th-12th grade high school students from New York City
Capacity: 12  
Duration: Three Mondays per month, 4-6:30, October-May  
Retention Rate: N/A

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) was founded in 1929 as an educational museum of modern art. MoMA’s mission is “to create a dialogue between the established and the experimental, the past and the present, in an environment that is responsive to the issues of modern and contemporary art, while being accessible to a public that ranges from scholars to young children” (The Museum of Modern Art)

Among their many teen out-of-school time programs, MoMA sponsors a Youth Advisory Council (YAC), a diverse group of 10th-12th grade New York City teens. The group meets weekly during the academic year to create, plan, and implement projects and events for their peers (MoMA website). The Red Studio Teen Podcast was developed by MoMA YAC in collaboration with Acoustiguide with the goal of creating dynamic audio guide for teens, by teens. MoMA YAC and Acoustiguide, teens developed their own collection of podcasts in response to the museum’s collections. In the process, students learned both technical and critical thinking skills including how to digitally record and edit scripts, incorporate music, and sound effects.
V. Key Findings

Program Design and Planning

First and foremost, a successful program for teens depends upon museum professionals’ ability to listen, care about, and respond to their observations and questions (Andrews, Asia 229). Media, social scientists and other professionals often tend to reinforce a negative stigma on teens as disengaged or troubled citizens. On the contrary, teens desire to play an active role as decision-makers and leaders in order to feel satisfaction and contribute to society (Scheer, 1997).

Given the opportunity to participate in their own experiences as active rather than passive learners, teens benefit on multiple levels. Checkoway argues that teen input into their own out-of-school time programs can lead to positive outcomes for the youth themselves and for the society in which they live. First, youth participation can strengthen their social development. They must interact with a group, consider others in their decisions, and understand how their choices fit into a larger network. Second, active participation can strengthen their organizational skills. By becoming part of the planning process rather than a passive bystander, teens can get hands-on experience in organizing and planning outcomes. Third, and perhaps most important, youth participation can lead to community change (2003).
The latter point, when applied to the inner workings of a museum, means that teen involvement has the potential to inform a much larger cultural dialogue and provide a new perspectives on visual culture. At each of these levels, teen participation in the program design and planning is a strong motivator for many teens when deciding whether or not to return to a museum because the approach aims to listen to and uphold their intrinsic interests.

Case in point: The Walker Art Center Teen Arts Council (WACTAC)

The Walker Art Center (WAC) has devoted significant resources to the development of its relationships with teens. Before initiating their teen programs, they established an “Adolescent Think Tank, or citywide alliance between educators, teenagers and staff from local and national cultural institutions”. (WACTAC How to Kit, n.d.) The group met monthly to discuss how to develop programs that would intellectually stimulate teens. In the process, they discovered that teens “desire to have input in the process, not just the product and that programs should allow them to participate in shaping and running the project” (WACTAC How to Kit, n.d.). This information may not have been new or surprising to committee members, or any practicing out-of-school time providers at the time. However, what was exceptional in this case, was how the Walker Art Center used this information. From their findings, the Walker created an eleven member Teen Arts Council, or WACTAC, in 1996 as the primary means to involve teens in organizing and participating in the museum’s programs for teen audiences. The teens began by meeting monthly at the museum with education staff to guide them. Christi Atkinson, the Assistant Director of Teen Programs at the time, noticed that “over and over again, we
saw that they (teens) were successful when they chose what projects to work on.”

Eventually, WACTAC members themselves made an executive decision to increase their participation in the program. They changed their schedule from monthly to weekly meetings, a decision which led to them playing an even greater role and having a broader impact in the museum. Since then, WACTAC has continued to meet every Thursday from September to July for ninety minutes to two hours each time.

WACTAC members continue to create their own attendance rules, rotate leadership, determine the programs in collaboration with museum staff, and manage a budget. The Walker was one of the first museums to fully empower teens over an extended period of time with the freedom to create public programs. Witt Siasoco, Teens Programs Manager, at the Walker emphasizes the importance of trusting in your teens, explaining, “the teens want to return because they know their opinion is valued” (Siasoco). He attributes much of the programs success to this mantra, a philosophy that grew out of years of history between the museum and its teen audience.

*Social Networking:*

Adolescence is a time of testing and forming one’s individual identity. More than any other stage in a person’s development, friendship and social relationships are critical to how one forms his or her own understanding of self and identity. “It is in their groups that teenagers develop a sense of themselves as individuals” (Jensen). Parents begin to witness this new change at the onset of adolescence. Teens no longer seek all of their validation from mom and dad. Instead, they become less interested in time spent with
parents and more focused on forming peer groups as a way of understanding themselves in a broader context.

The journey to define one’s identity leads teens to test out various social groups and activities. Some communities, more than others, are positioned to provide teens with positive outlets where they can socialize and become part of a peer group. However, “when a community cannot give its youth socially acceptable modes for carrying out the tasks of adolescence, the young people become vulnerable to other, less positive vehicles for finding answers to those universal Who am I? questions of youth” (2000: 5). In the book, The New Town Square: Museums and Communities in Transition, author Robert Archibald describes museums as a gathering place for individuals to convene and share in discussion about history and visual culture. Archibald’s description recalls the image of a piazza, or a community-meeting place, a vision that meets a strong need in developing teens considering that they “consistently express to program leaders the desire to have a place where they can gather and have ‘their kind of fun’” (Hall, et. all, 2004: 10).

Case in point: The Warhol Museum, Youth Invasion Night

Youth Invasion, a weeklong multimedia project, gives local teens an opportunity to "take over" the museum with activities and programs based on teens’ unique interpretations of Andy Warhol’s art. Included among the many activities is a juried art exhibition with works chosen by a museum curator.

Youth Invasion is designed for teens by teens from The Warhol Museum’s staple after-
school program, *Youth Publications*, with the assistance of a program coordinator on staff at the museum. The week begins with a kick-off event featuring local musical acts, spoken word performances, break dancing contests, and Warhol-inspired fashion shows. (Warhol website) The kick-off event boasts hundreds of teen attendees and is designed around a selected theme. The theme of *Youth Invasion 2005* was "House Party," for which youth created art for the galleries, designed a room-sized Twister board, and had a root beer keg set-up in the cafe. Live performances included local bands and rap artists, along with two pop fashion shows. More recently, the Warhol Museum helped teens form a *Youth Invasion* form a MySpace page to network with other teens from around the Pittsburg area about the event.

**Mentor(s)**

“Mentor” first appears as the name of a mortal in greek mythology. Mentor was the friend and advisor to Odysseus, a great warrior who fought in the Trojan War. As he prepared for battle, Odysseus entrusted his friend to become the advisor and guardian to his son, Telemachus. The word “mentor’ carries the same meaning and importance in today’s society as it did in ancient Greece, that of a guide and advisor. Teens who identify at least one influential mentor in their life have a higher sense of self and are more likely to take risks that affect their lives positively (Students Against Destructive Decisions).

When applied to the framework of a museum teen program, a caring and knowledgeable adult mentor(s) is essential to the overall success of the program. The Carnegie Council
on Adolescent Development found “that the nature of young people’s response to the adults who work with them is the most critical factor in program success” (13). The adult mentor, generally an appointed staff member, should serve as a main point-of-contact and someone to whom teens can identify and relate to, and learn from, especially in the initially unfamiliar museum environment.

Case in point: The Walker Art Center Teen Arts Council (WACTAC)
Witt Siasoco, the Program Manager of Teen Programs at the Walker Art Center, joined the museum in 1998 to work with their Teen Arts Council (WACTAC). Before that time, Siasoco worked as a coordinator of the Young Artist Cabaret at Intermedia Arts, a monthly open mic for young artists. Witt also serves on the board of Juxtaposition Arts, a North Minneapolis arts organization that empowers youth and community to use the arts to reach their full potential. This year, he was selected as an AAM recipient for the 2008 Professional Development Fund for Emerging Leaders of Color.

As a staff member and mentor, WACTAC teens learn from Siasoco how to conceive, organize and jury their own exhibition called Hot Art Injection. The teen-curated exhibition includes visual art, creative writing, music and video works created by teen artists from around Minneapolis. Siasoco says the exhibition serves teen artists by providing a “professional and un patronizing” way to present new art, adding “teenage artists are reacting to what’s happening on the news, what’s happening in pop culture. From a rapper describing life on the north side to customized Nikes, this art takes the pulse of the culture. In that sense, these artists aren’t so different from the ones featured
in the Walker galleries.” WACTAC members respond positively to Siasoco for his ability to relate to and understand his audience.

External Requirements and Incentives

Recent studies on teens and out-of-school time programs have revealed that programs that sustain student interest and have positive effects for teens (outside of the school day) often include employment or service learning/community service (Eccles, 2001).

Paid employment is one of the highest priorities for most high-school aged youth. There are a significant number of teenagers in the United States who are employed after-school and on weekends. Rothstein found that “approximately 40% of 16 and 17 year olds work during the school year and one-quarter of these youth work 20 or more hours a week” (Beyond the Barriers 10). For some of these teens, especially those from low-income families, paid employment is not an option but a necessity to support the household or to earn spending money. According to the Harvard Family Research Project, one-third of teens (16 and 17 years old) in low-income communities work for pay and many more are interested in paid employment. Other motivators for youth employment beside income included teens’ desire to gain workforce experience, establish independence or learn new skills.

In addition to academics and paid employment, service learning is another external requirement (or incentive) that ranks high for teen participation outside of the school day. According to a national survey of youth between the ages of 12-18, an estimated 15.5
million teenagers (or 55%) participated in volunteer activities through a formal organization during 2004 and older teenagers (ages 16-19) have more than doubled their time spent volunteering since 1989 (Grimm et. all, 2005). It is difficult to say whether Generation “Y” teens, are simply more civic-minded as a cohort than their predecessors or whether these findings point to an external requirement recently introduced through the school system. In the past decade; however, a growing number of high schools now mandate students to fulfill a specific number of community service hours in order to graduate. For example, the state of Maryland requires high school students to fulfill seventy-five hours of “student service” upon graduation while the District of Columbia requires one hundred service hours.

Case in point: The Andy Warhol Museum, Youth Publications Program

The Andy Warhol Museum has designed a model that combines youth employment and education through a yearlong teen program. Youth Publications, gives students the opportunity to gain serious work experience in a museum setting while getting paid for their efforts. Students are hired through an application process and paid with funding from YouthWorks, a Pittsburgh organization that helps young adults build job skills. Urban Interview participants meet three days a week for three hours each day, a total of 9 hours a week, to produce the Warhol’s annual teen magazine online and in print.

The program reports a 95% attrition rate for the entire academic year, an exceptionally high participation level compared to most after-school teen programs. Teen programs
coordinator, Mary Tremonte, attributes their success to the quality of the experience stating, “teens know they are valued for their time here”, and as a result, “we work with a lot of our students over a period of two to three years.”

New Skills

Teens are interested in learning programs that can provide them with new skills or help them develop skills in an area of interest. According to the Forum for Youth Investment, “the older teens are, the more they want their time to count” and older youth are interested in fewer activities of a longer duration, which have direct connections to future goals and aspirations (The Forum 4). “As one youth noted, “I used to pick activities based on having fun. Now it’s more about teaching myself and gaining knowledge—that’s the difference” (The Forum 4).

Most skills can be broken down into what many human resource professionals refer to as soft or hard skills. Soft skills are intangible characteristics a person might possess or develop over time. Examples include creativity, innovation, communication, problem solving skills and even empathy. Hard skills are more tangible by definition and immediately visible as a result. They require a step-by-step, technical knowledge and mechanical skills that allow a person to do something like write a letter or build a house. Due to advancements in technology and outsourcing practices, the needs for hard skills have been reduced and soft skills have redefined the current job market. Soft skills have now become highly valuable attributes in today’s global industry. In fact, some argue
that these are the only skills a computer will not be able to emulate in the future; and are therefore, the most important to develop.

Case in point: MoMA, Red Studio Podcasts

The Museum of Modern Art's Youth Advisory Council (YAC), a group of thirteen 11th and 12th grade students from New York City high schools, collaborated with MoMA educators and Acoustiguide to develop the Red Studio Audio Program. Their goal was to create a collection of podcasts for other teens based on various objects in the museum. The resulting audio files, all elegantly composed, incorporate background music, visual analysis of the work, interviews with museum visitors and staff (conducted by the teens themselves) and thought-provoking questions about the work. Teens met once a week over an entire academic year to create what resulted in a two to three-minute audio file. The project required the teens to develop skills in editing, communication, visual analysis, writing, interviewing and technology. These skill-sets may seem insurmountable to many adults, but for these teens, they were a great source of pride and accomplishment.

In 2007, the Red Studio Audio Program was selected by the AAM Media and Technology division for a MUSE Award. One of the judges remarked “(this program) meets a great need to provide teen audiences with a forum for expression and communication. The Museum of Modern Art's (MoMA) approach in utilizing its teen audience to engage new visitors and offer new perspectives is fresh and inviting. Teen audiences tend to be underserved by museums, but MoMA succeeds in harnessing this
group's potential and making the museum experience accessible and fun”. The learning experience, in this case, used a familiar medium to engage teens in a challenging set of skills that required their participation over an extended period of time. All of the original participants attended and completed their pod casts, which were later made available for other teen visitors to the museum.
VI. Discussion and Conclusion

In the past twenty years, art museums have more than tripled their efforts to serve teen audiences, especially through out-of-school time programs aimed at developmental outcomes. Some of these museums have made monumental strides in engaging teens for participation and have since dispelled the traditional notion that teens were “disinterested” or bored by learning in the museum. In fact, they proved that the opposite is true. Teens are, and can be, active learners in museums and contribute to the overall culture within museum environments. The museums in this case study provide insight into the practice and implementation of teen programs that engage for participation; and therefore, meaningful learning.

Teen participation in out-of-school time programs is a great challenge for many museums. Far too many providers see a high level of attrition early on in the life of a teen program. In all four of these case studies, and in the review of literature, we have learned that a successful program must be grounded in youth development outcomes, and at the same time, meet the practical needs of today’s teens. In other words, a youth-development based model is not enough on its own—21st century teens are seeking experiences that meet a variety of needs that straddle both the developmental and practical aspects of their lives. Ideally, in order to respond to the full spectrum of needs of today’s high school youth, program providers will need to craft programs that creatively
balance both. Findings from this case study demonstrate that the selected museums considered the practical needs of teens that were relevant to their 21st century concerns or interests. Five dominant conclusions arose as a result of this study:

1. Involve Teens in Programming. Unlike programs for young children, a successful teen program cannot thrive unless it integrates teens’ voice into its design. Program design and planning for teens needs to be looked at very differently from those for elementary and even middle school aged students. As teens begin to mature, their cognitive abilities move from concrete thinking to abstract reasoning. Their problem-solving skills become more sophisticated and they can examine situations, develop hypothesis, and mentally manipulate possible solutions (Beane). These same cognitive constructs lead to their ability to think independently and make more active choices in their own lives. As teens mature intellectually, it is important that they be empowered to test these new skills sets in a supportive and caring environment.

The art museums in this case study have made it possible for participating teens to play an active role in the outcomes and decisions of the programs. Perhaps the most direct example of this practice was found in the early establishment of the teen advisory committee, which continues to be a highly successful approach for many art museums still today. There are many innovative examples of programs that involve teens actively in program design and outcomes. Youth advisory groups offer only one such example that has been tested by various museums, due in large part to the visionary practice at the Walker Art Center. This approach does not mean that staff should be absent from the
programming process or that there should be no structure to the program itself. On the contrary, museum teen programs can benefit from a structure where teen-directed choice and structure coexist. Leslie Dolland, a former Teen Arts Council member at the Walker said of her experience, “working on the ’zine (a print project) gave us a lot of freedom within a structure and gave me confidence in my creative abilities. Not a lot of kids have the opportunity to make so many decisions” (Walker How to Kit). Leslie’s words echo the voice of teens that long to contribute their own opinions and practice making decisions. Regardless of the methodology, museums teen programs must be conscientious of the active role that teens need and want to play in their own learning, an opportunity they may not be granted in the formal school environment. Teen programs must offer students identifiable and concrete opportunities to contribute to the programming process while providing a platform and structure for them to be successful.

2. **Promote Positive Socialization with Peers and Adults.** Since high school aged students embark on a period of extreme independence, they actively seek out social peer networks and adult mentors in a quest to understand themselves and their own identity. Art museums are ideally situated to provide teens with positive social interactions, which can play a vital role in outcomes such as high self-esteem and self-confidence. While one could argue that positive friendships and mentors are key to any person’s life, no matter what age, they are essential ingredients to how a young person will develop and form an understanding of herself. This is especially important for individuals who do not ‘fit in’ easily to a social group or who are marginalized for their differences. Bicultural teens,
for example, wrestle not only with orientation toward their own culture and language, but that of American culture as well.

Groups gravitate to a space or activity that best cultivates their social experiences. Similarly, individuals approach the museum for socialization in different ways and museums can provide multiple avenues for social interaction among their audiences. In the ideal setting of the museum, teens can converge, interact and learn informally from one another and they can find commonalities in their differences through the language of art. A successful museum teen program recognizes the importance of peer interaction and promotes opportunities for teens to congregate and develop socially through these experiences. In addition, such programs are conscientious of the audience and how that audience socializes. The methods by which young people connect and communicate have changed dramatically in the past few years. Today, teens network in both a physical, real-world environment and in a digital realm. The digital age has made it possible for people to find one another, form relationships and connect to networks without ever meeting. Platforms such as MySpace, Friendster and Facebook experience an overwhelming amount of traffic from thousands of high-school aged youth every day. Not surprisingly, Generation “Y” is one of the most active age groups on the World Wide Web. Many museums, including those cited in this case study, have experienced great success with online and on-site initiatives that promote positive social networks. Equally, the dedicated adult mentor can be a keystone for success in any teen program. An adult mentor(s) was designated at each of the four museums, serving as a positive guide who oriented students to the museum and helped them transition from the unfamiliar to the
familiar. The adult mentor is a positive social and professional presence, and he or she also plays a vital role as the institutional advocate and voice for the teens.

3. **Introduce New Skills.** Teens understand the value of marketable skills in the 21st century and are more conscientious about their skill-sets than ever before. For decades, museums and artists have recognized the value of learning in an informal environment, especially for the potential to cultivate soft skills. In viewing art, individuals learn to analyze, empathize and draw conclusions. In creating art, individuals must problem solve, think critically and communicate effectively—all valuable assets to employers in the 21st century. The nature of informal learning promotes skills that will increase teens’ opportunities in the future and aid in their personal development. As the emphasis on standardized testing continues to increase, today’s high school students have less opportunity to cultivate their skills in formal learning environments. It is important, perhaps now more than ever before, that informal learning environments come forward to provide teens an opportunity to develop new skills, particularly those that will help them advance their strengths beyond high school. In order to build new skills, program providers must define clear, measurable goals. The Surdna Foundation recently reported that the setting of interim and final goals that will demonstrate to students that progress has been achieved helps keep students engaged and committed to the art-making process, or program (Surdna Foundation) The MoMA’s *Red Studio Teen Audio Program* masterfully demonstrated that a museum can provide a meaningful learning experience while providing new skills with clear goals—in this case, a teen pod cast on select works of art.
4. Fulfill An External Requirement (or Incentives). It is important to be realistic when setting the scope for a museum teen program. The program should offer opportunity for extended participation, but be conscientious of teens’ time and external commitments. In the 21st century, teens face far greater demands on their free time than that of their predecessors. Academic pressures alone greatly affect the decisions that teens make about their free time. In a recent study on teens in Washington DC, high school students stated that school was their “biggest cause of stress” and 56% reported having dropped an activity or hobby because schoolwork took too much time (Aratani, 2007). Competition to meet increasing college entry requirements has many high school students averaging three hours of homework each night. Time-management and external demands are reoccurring topics in the lives of today’s teens.

Considering the external demands on teens’ day-to-day lives, it is important to be aware of the factors that shape their choices outside of the school day. When teens are free from academic requirements, there are other external factors that shape how they choose to spend their free time. Those museums that have built in opportunities to fulfill external requirements or incentives have enjoyed a consistent level of teen participation over a period of time as well as positive feedback from their teen audiences. In short, these programs found a way to “kill two birds with one stone” such as paid employment options or fulfillment of community service hours, while serving the needs of their audience. Teens are attracted to these experiences because they provide them with a sense of independence, compensation for their time (either monetary or good will) and an opportunity to test themselves in new roles. Both of these real-world scenarios serve a
variety of purposes that are important and valuable to developing adolescents. Most important, they provide a platform to test one’s self in new roles and they fulfill personal needs or requirements that are relevant to their lives. Such an example was found in the model program *Youth Publications* at The Andy Warhol Museums, which folded in an employment-based approach to the learning experience, resulting in high-levels of involvement from a diverse network of teens.

5. **Evaluate Regularly.** Finally, teen programs must implement regular evaluation practices in order to sustain teen involvement. Qualitative and quantitative evaluation is necessary to gauge meaningful learning and engagement. An attendance sheet is a simple, yet highly important quantitative tool in tracking the involvement of students over an extended period of time. Due to the fact that so many teen programs experience early drop-offs in attendance, it is highly suggested that formative, or ongoing, evaluation practices be developed at the onset of a program as well. These practices, woven into the regular program activities, can provide valuable insight into teens’ needs before drop-off occurs. The Whitney Museum of American Art has experienced success with ongoing interviews and questionnaires as well as peer and self-evaluation tools such as regular art critiques. The Walker Art Center has found success in preliminary and exit-interviews, which are all video recorded and administered by a staff member at the museum.

Entering into the next decade, it is important to recognize that Generation “Y” teens will grow to be the largest teen population in U.S. history. Art museums are in a unique position to provide teens with meaningful learning experiences, outside of the school day
through programs that embrace their developmental, as well as, practical needs. In return, teen involvement in the fabric of museum life brings new perspective and valuable insight to visual culture and education. In their short history working together, teens and museums have begun to scratch the surface of a much larger dialogue. Given the proper framework, they can continue to build upon a structure that allows for a meaningful learning experience where both parties continue to learn from one another.
Appendixes 1: Interview Instrument

Museum Educator Questionnaire/Interview:

**Program Logistics:**

Museum (and partner organization if applicable):
Name/Job Title or Role:
Name of Program:
How long has the program been in existence?
How long have you worked with this program?
Who is the target audience?: (ex. “at-risk teens”, “teens ages 12-19”, etc.)
Where does the program take place?:
Would you consider this location to be fairly “safe”?
Is it accessible by public transportation?
How do you recruit?
What are the mission and/or objective(s) of this program?

**Schedule/Attendance**
What is the length of the program: (ex. Teens meet once weekly for 90 minutes for 15 weeks)

How is the attendance policy and schedule determined? Were time management issues facing teens factored into this decision?

Have you experienced challenges with attendance? If so, what reasons are given for lower attendance?

Approximately what percentage of teens that enroll complete the program?

**Teen Involvement**
Does the curriculum design promote and connect to topics relevant to teens? If yes, please provide a recent example.

Who is involved in determining the projects, lessons or themes?

Are there any aspects of the program that are student-directed/driven?

**Skills/Outcomes**
Would you say that this program emphasizes skill-building in art, design, technology or any other subject? If so, which skills does it emphasize and has this been effective in engaging teen audiences?
How do you know if the program has met its objectives? (i.e. How do you evaluate the program or know if it has been successful?)

**Incentives**

Does this program satisfy an external requirement? (ie. employment, community service hours, academic credit)

Do you feel this type of incentive is necessary? Why?

**Socialization**

Which representative from the museum do the teens have contact with the most? What is their relationship with that person (what role does that person play)?

Does the program encourage teens to develop positive peer-to-peer experiences and does it promote a social atmosphere different from their school environment? If so, how?

Do teens ever recruit from their own social network of friends or family?

**Challenges/Success**

What do you think is the most valuable aspect of this program for the teen audience it serves?

What has been the biggest challenge?

What has been the most important lesson learned?
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