

Time In

The Time In Children's Arts Initiative

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The Idea

Time In is an innovative outreach initiative intended to bring children out of underserved classrooms on a weekly basis and offer them an arts-based immersion designed to make them active, imaginative participants in the world around them. An offshoot of the distinguished children's arts program, HiArt!, **Time in** proceeds from the understanding that responsive, intelligent, self-motivated children grow not from "time out," but from "time in. For this first year, the **Time In** children's arts initiative has made arrangements with Sharon Dunn, Director of Arts and Special Projects for the New York City Board of Education, Karen Abramovitz, Regional Arts Supervisor for Region 10 and Diana Diaz, principal of PS 241 in West Harlem to offer that school's Pre-K and Kindergarten students the unprecedented opportunity to come out of their classrooms for a full half day each week and to immerse themselves in an intellectually stimulating, interdisciplinary arts environment – whether at the HiArt! studio in Chelsea, or at museums, galleries or other arts venues within the city.

Grounded in the highly successful teaching models developed over the past decade by HiArt!, **Time In** will offer children in underserved schools a full range of conceptually related arts-based experiences – music, movement, hands-on and visual arts, literature and film. Our decade of experience as leaders in the field of children's arts education has shown that the HiArt! model of sustained immersion in a play-based, multi-sensorial learning environment not only affords children real-world competence in the arts and related academic disciplines, but immeasurably increases self-esteem, allowing children to confidently take the lead in their interactions with the world around them. The unique, learning environment developed by HiArt! offers a flexible approach to the traditional classroom: respect and opportunity are accorded to learning styles differences, and

children are given the permission to discover and explore the creative, intellectual, emotional and artistic space that is uniquely theirs.

What We Can and Will Do

Now beginning its 10th year as the most innovative arts program in New York, HiArt! has been actively working to develop a new understanding of teaching children interdisciplinarily through the arts. We have seen the program's continued ability to:

- Stimulate children's intellectual curiosity and encourage their ability to follow through on their ideas
- Give young children an firm grasp of real world cultural artifacts: operas, symphonies, ballets, visual art, poetry, film etc.
- Help children gain an ability to speak in front of a group and articulate their personal vision
- Build continuously upon prior learning experiences to develop ever-more complex and sophisticated forms of personal expression
- Help children develop the sustained focus needed to work on a single project over an extended period of time
- Support the child's imagination and creativity as fundamental elements of problem-solving abilities
- Encourage children to view the world in new and personal ways
- Allow children to express themselves artistically as individuals whether through hands on art, storytelling, music, movement or other forms of performance art
- Build children's sense of self, as artists and artistic participants in the real world in which they live

Our Partners

Time In's visionary approach to outreach immediately received fiscal sponsorship through a competitive application process at the New York Foundation for the Arts, and went on to obtain New York City Board of Education endorsement in record time. Much thought and research went into finding a suitable partner school, and we are very excited to be working with PS 241 on West 113th Street. Having completed all formalities for the implementation of this extraordinary arts initiative in time for a Fall 2006 debut, only four weeks remain to establish the funding needed to bring the dream of **Time In** to fruition. All donations to **Time In** are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law, and will be handled directly by the New York Foundation of the Arts as part of its fiscal sponsorship program.

The Pedagogical Experience

Time In 's outreach will consist of Kindergarten and Pre-K students participating in a once weekly, 2.5 hour arts-based immersion -- exactly like the HiArt! Holiday Camp or Culture Bugs summer program (9:30-12 or 12 to 2:30) -- in which the two fundamental components of HiArt! -- gallery visits and studio time -- will combine in an arts "intensive" hands-on experience, for the full academic year. This sustained exposure would give children the opportunity to see the work of contemporary artists and still make their own art in the same day, to work on large-scale projects over the course of one or several days, or even over several months. Performing arts will be consistently integrated into the curriculum: A large piece of music -- an opera, ballet or symphonic work -- is almost always at the core of our time together -- lending continuity and generating the impetus for much of the children's hands-on work. The use of story-based art -- like opera, for instance -- also provides a basis for the development of pre-reading narrativity and sequencing skills.

As children build sensorial awareness through their interactions with the plastic and performing arts, they develop and refine gross and fine motor skills, hone their powers of visual and aural observation, and gain a sense of themselves as independent, self-motivated learners with the ability to sustain long-term focus on single projects in which they are actively engaged. The fact that they achieve mastery and knowledge of real world works of art, music, literature and dance only serves to further increase their self-esteem and foster a general cultural awareness. Past experience has shown us that the undiluted integration of HiArt!'s methodology results in quantifiable improvements in children's academic performance and sense of social well-being and we look forward to documenting those gains over the coming year.

Time In will be under my direction and staffed by working artists who are experienced in the HiArt methodology. New teaching artists will be trained throughout the year to ensure the program's ability to expand to other schools and to continue to effectively service the children of PS 241. In contradistinction to many existing programs, we believe that training for this type of work requires time and experience: this initiative is organized so as to make meaningful training feasible for all staff. This will ensure not only the best possible experiences for the children of PS 241, but also Time In's potential for expansion at the close of this year.

HiArt!'s pedagogical methodology is founded on structured, broad ranging parameters, anchored in sophisticated, real-world information as a means to inspire and empower children in their efforts to decipher and effect the world in which they live. At HiArt! children develop the *skill* of experimentation: they use real artists' materials to integrate problem-solving with the pleasure of creation, and, in a broad spectrum of arts events and activities presented to them multi-sensorially, children are actively engaged in the contemporary arts.

“You have changed our lives forever,” wrote a Harvard-educated mother in response to the effect of HiArt! on her two young boys. If HiArt! can change the lives of the already privileged, what might it do for children for whom so much less support is readily available? In 1998, the Harlem Y approached me to guest teach for them. I accepted on the condition that the money they had set aside to pay me be used exclusively for supplies for the children instead. Although the children had never before been exposed to anything like Ravel’s *L’enfant et les sortilèges*, the HiArt! multi-sensorial approach captured the attention of every child and they literally hung on my arms and legs each day at the close of our sessions.

Regardless of their backgrounds, children are children: the world of imagination, creativity and fantasy is their most fertile ground. As educators and artists we must use this knowledge to create multi-disciplinary, arts-centered curricula for children of all races and socio-economic backgrounds. We must acknowledge children’s phenomenal gifts and innate abilities, in this age of media saturation, and plan new kinds of learning environments that stimulate, rather than stifle our children. HiArt! helps create not only wonderfully conceptual thinkers, but great arts lovers and artists, all of whom will nourish our society in the days to come.

Time In will provide an opportunity to document closely and systematically what children gain – artistically and academically – from this interdisciplinary arts/learning environment when it is integrated as a fundamental component of a public school classroom. **Time In** was designed with the counsel of Mary Six Rupert, Senior Officer of Fiscal Sponsorship at NYFA, with the understanding that upon the successful completion of this initiative, we will move forward to form an independent 501c(3) dedicated to the dissemination of this program throughout public school systems.

Our Goals

The goals of **Time In** can be summarized as follows:

- To provide a space in which children actively interact with working artists, and in which real art, not watered down, formulaic versions of art, becomes a natural and sought after part of their lives.
- To create a radically new approach to educational outreach in the arts dominated by a spirit of artistic generosity, rather than as a response to academic paucity.
- To give children in schools at risk a sustained opportunity to experience the exhilaration and empowerment of time spent in an art-filled world.
- To train emerging artists, and to encourage them to understand and develop their teaching of art as an integrated, humanistic discipline, not a didactic exercise. To help them understand teaching as a performance art, and to view their interaction with children as part of their larger creative process.