

Virtual Approaches Hold Promise for Expanding After-school Art Programming

Four Boys & Girls Clubs implementing high-quality art skill development classes for tweens and teens experimented with five different virtual approaches that hold promise for expanding programming. This brief describes three approaches that reach young people when they can't be at the programming location and two that expand the reach of on-site art programs. It also shares six key lessons about implementing virtual art programs.

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Reaching Young People Who are Off-Site



	Live Programming	Recorded Content	Live Stream
What it looks like	Teaching artists host a live virtual art class on Zoom for individual youth or a group of youth.	Teaching artists record art lessons that can be accessed on YouTube.	Teaching artists live stream interactive art demonstrations where youth can ask questions and provide input.
How it can be used	To extend access to live art programming for youth who are interested in continuing to develop their art skills when they can't come to the program site (e.g., they move, switch schools, get a job, etc.). Can also be used for individual or small group projects on youth's own timeline.	To increase access to additional art programming for youth who participate in art classes at the program site or take live virtual art classes and want more content.	To expand exposure to the art form for youth who participate at the program site or take live virtual art classes.
Implementation Considerations	Youth and teaching artists must have WiFi and a computer, tablet, or phone.		
	Limits on class size based on platform, art form, and teaching artist capacity.	No limits on class size.	
	Teaching artists cannot provide hands on support to youth.		
	Teaching artists must have strong youth development skills to foster relationships and must gather youth input to keep them engaged.	Teaching artists must have strong digital skills to create engaging content.	
	Performing arts requires a specialized approach and equipment to sync video and audio.		
	Youth need art materials at home to participate.		Youth need art materials at home if they are going to do the activity but they can also just watch art being made.
	Intended to be live, but can be viewed as anytime if recorded.	Is accessible anytime.	Can be viewed live or accessible anytime if it is recorded and posted.

Expanding Programming For Young People Who are On-Site



	Live Programming with a Remote Teaching Artist	Recorded Content that is Used for Instruction in Class
What it looks like	Teaching artists lead an art class by joining the program site remotely through Zoom (or a similar platform) – the class is managed by an on-site staff member who is not a teaching artist.	Teaching artists record art lessons for an on-site staff member who is not a teaching artist to implement at the program site.
How it can be used	<p>To engage teaching artists who are not local. For instance, a guest teaching artist who can't come to the site in-person (e.g., lives too far away) could "Zoom" in and lead a live class remotely.</p> <p>To expand programming reach by allowing teaching artists to teach in more locations. Zooming in to sites reduces teaching artists' travel time and can allow them to teach in more than one site simultaneously.</p>	<p>To engage teaching artists who are not local. For instance, a guest teaching artist who lives far away could record a class and an on-site staff member who is not a teaching artist could facilitate it.</p> <p>To expand programming reach by recording content that can be used at multiple sites.</p>
Implementation Considerations	Requires Wi-Fi and technology (microphones, lighting, video cameras, etc.) for both the programming location and the teaching artist.	Requires that the teaching artist has the equipment needed to develop high-quality content.
	Limits on class size based on on-site staff and space capacity.	
	Hands-on support is limited to what the on-site staff member can provide.	
	Teaching artists must have strong youth development skills to foster relationships and gather youth input to keep participants engaged.	Teaching artists must have strong digital skills to create engaging content.
Coordination between the on-site staff member and teaching artist is critical.	On-site staff members with knowledge of the art form can help youth when they have questions.	

Six Key Lessons About Virtual Art Programming

Youth are used to high-quality virtual and digital experiences, so Club organizations needed to provide infrastructure for virtual programming and professional development and support to teaching artists with limited digital and/or virtual teaching know-how.

Some art forms adapt more easily to virtual programming than others. Digital arts are particularly well-suited for the virtual environment, and digital artists had the skills to develop high-quality virtual content. Teaching artists in other disciplines faced a steeper learning curve.

Teaching artists had to provide even more opportunities for youth choice and input, as well as active learning in virtual programming than they did for in-person programming, especially for youth who were joining class from home. They had both formal and informal conversations with participating youth about their interests, incorporated youth culture into activities, and respected youth perspectives.

Program participants reported that guidance, instruction, and support from teaching artists was stronger when it was provided in-person. Virtual teaching artists have to provide clear verbal guidance, “go slow,” and be patient. Some Club organizations combined virtual programming with in-person programming to give participants opportunities for in-person feedback and demonstration.

While developing new relationships virtually can be challenging, some teaching artists were able to develop positive relationships with participants even if they had never met them in person. Teaching artists’ sense of humor, encouragement, intentionality in connecting with participants, and understanding participants’ individual styles and needs fostered these positive relationships.

Virtual programming may be most successful with older youth who are more self-directed or youth who have more advanced art skills.

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