WE WILL CHICAGO

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Arts & Culture Meeting #11

March 21, 2022, 04:00PM | 2 hours

Documented by: Collin Hazlett

ATTENDEES

- Rachael Smith
- Anezka Gocova
- Alison Zehr
- Erin Harkey
- Julie Burros
- Melanie Wang
- Wisdom Baty

- Julia deBettencourt
- Angela Lin
- Amanda Carlson
- Gabriela Jirasek
- Kevin Corbett
- Nicole Upton

- Clevan Tucker
- Dawn Posey
- Enrique Morales
- Henry Wishcamper
- Maritza Nazario
- Peggy Stewart

★ WE WILL CHICAGO
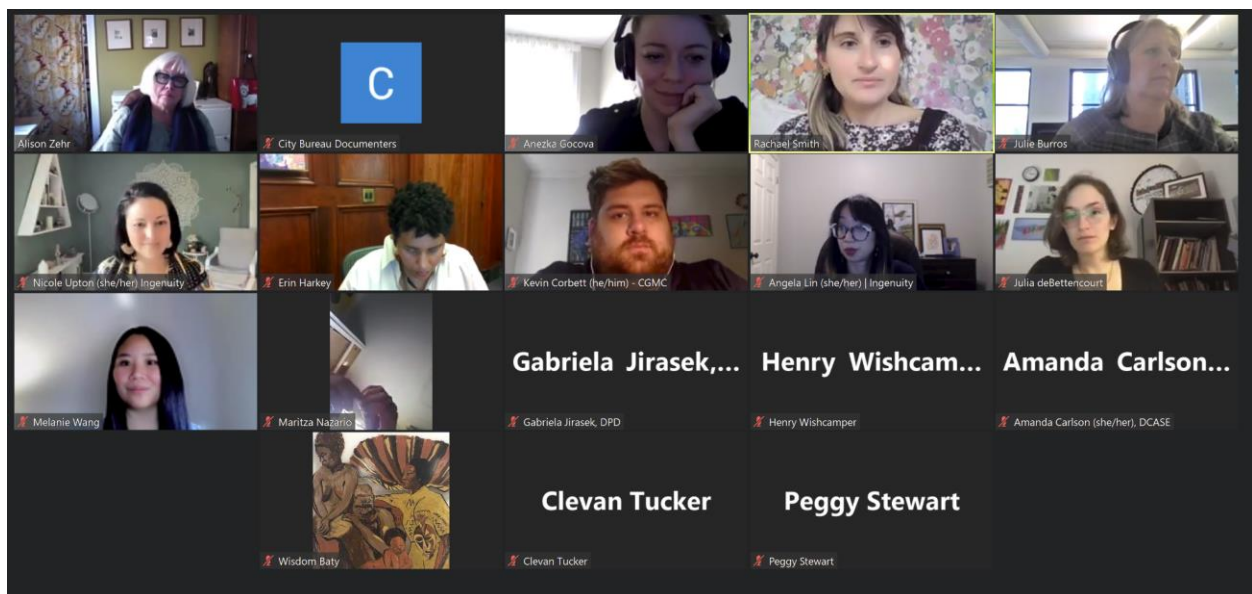
MEETING GOAL

Hear a presentation on arts education in Chicago Public Schools (CPS), begin to develop policy recommendations for Goal 4 (which deals with arts education) and review the city's edits to Goals 1 and 2.

WHERE WE ARE

Step 1
We Are
Setting the Stage

Step 2
We Have and Need
Develop A Policy Toolkit

Step 3
We Will
Set Policy Framework

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1 Representatives from Chicago Public Schools and the arts education nonprofit Ingenuity gave a data-driven presentation demonstrating significant racial inequity in access to quality arts education in Chicago, with Black students less likely to attend a school with a high-quality arts program or an arts partner organization (i.e. a community arts organization working in the school). Pillar members adopted all of the presentation's policy suggestions into the Goal 4 policy proposals.

2 Several arts partner organization representatives in the pillar spoke about the difficulty of maintaining an arts partner relationship with Chicago Public Schools due to lack of financial support for their work and lack of art programs in the schools. All pillar members seemed to agree the work of CPS arts partners is important and should be supported.

3 Many pillar members feel that the language of Goals 1 and 2 is too vague, too general or too toothless. It seems likely that the pillar will continue to make significant revisions to the language of Goals 1 and 2.

CONVERSATION HIGHLIGHTS

"This particular point of data that you have [on Black students being less likely to attend schools with high quality arts programs] is so incredibly important, because it is tangible and measurable in a way that we have never had before, and it's also a goal to move towards. … And if we could fix this thing, it's the thing that almost fixes everything."

Erin Harkey | Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, Commissioner

"There is a rich cultural tapestry of arts organizations providing education programs that would be, and will be, more culturally relevant to some schools than other organizations might be. Part of our challenge will be figuring out how to facilitate those connections."

Nicole Upton | Ingenuity, Executive Director

"It was hard, because the burden kept falling onto our organization to keep finding the funding to keep doing our programming within the school."

Enrique Morales | Northwest Arts Connection, artist/researcher/educator

"Some of the sections in general, I worry that they have lost their teeth, and some of the policies individually within it I worry have lost their teeth."

Henry Wishcamper | Urban Juncture, Director of Community Development

Opening

- There is some discussion over whether the final meeting (#14) will take place in person. No decision has been made on this yet.

Policy Direction and Discussion: Arts Education in CPS

- Julia deBettencourt, executive director of arts education at CPS; Nicole Upton, executive director of arts education nonprofit Ingenuity; and Angela Lin, senior data analyst at Ingenuity, give a presentation on arts education at CPS schools.

- deBettencourt begins by showing a diagram of Chicago's arts education ecosystem laid out as a series of concentric rings:

    o   At the center: Students

    o   First ring: Teachers and teaching artists next

    o   Second ring: Schools and arts partner organizations

    o   Third ring: Chicago Public Schools administration, the city of Chicago government, Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE), Chicago Park District, Chicago Public Library

    o   Fourth, outer ring: Funders and policymakers

- Upton gives a list of data that was not collected prior to Chicago's 2012 Cultural Plan and 2012 Arts Education Plan:

    o   Number of arts teachers in CPS

    o   Number of minutes of art instruction

    o   Arts disciplines by the schools and grade levels at which they are taught

    o   Arts partner organizations and what schools they work in

    o   Which schools have robust arts programming versus little to no arts programming

- deBettencourt explains that one of the goals of the 2012 Arts Education Plan was to build a system to track data on the arts in CPS, and that this goal has been achieved. Now CPS has access to all the data Upton mentioned. CPS uses this data to assign each school a Creative Schools Certification rating from "Emerging" to "Excelling," and provide each school with a customized roadmap to improve their arts equity.

- Angela Lin reports some data from Ingenuity's 2022 Data Snapshot:

    o   95% of CPS schools have completed the survey necessary to receive a rating. The number of schools receiving an "Excelling" or "Strong" rating was at its maximum in the 2016-2017 school year (65%) and has since dropped to 57%.

    o   Black students are less likely to attend a school rated "Excelling" or "Strong" in the category of Staffing, regardless of school enrollment or type.

- Black students are less likely than any other demographic group to attend a school with an arts partnership organization working in the school.

  - The number of arts partnerships dropped from 559 in the 2018-2019 school year to 295 in 2020-2021. All types of arts programs except online programs dropped across the same period.

- deBettencourt and Upton outline two policy recommendations based on this data:

  - Invest city dollars across four years in "Arts Opportunity Schools," low-enrollment, majority Black schools

    ▪ Provide these schools with mentorship, professional development, capacity-building supports and arts partners.

  - Invest city dollars in arts partners that are small-sized and BIPOC-owned, and streamline the process for connecting arts partners to schools.

- Wisdom Baty: "I'm just curious as to your recommendations on cultural competency in the education field."

  - deBettencourt says, "If you aren't getting to know their students, using the curriculum to honor their identity, inviting them to bring their full selves to the curriculum, then that is not the arts education that we believe students deserve. The data we have does not address that … I think that is an area of growth in terms of how we do that at scale."

  - Baty: "I want to add on that … the demographics of teachers is something that needs to be addressed." Melanie Wang adds that she has the same question.

  - deBettencourt says, "We have been piloting some efforts to build a teacher pipeline that is reflective of the students of Chicago." She says they are graduating their first class of dance teacher residents this June, prioritizing teachers who were CPS students themselves or who contribute to diversity in the teacher pool, "because it is absolutely still overwhelmingly Caucasian and female."

  - Upton says that the lack of diversity among arts partners is partly due to schools reaching out to "the known names" — established organizations. "There is a rich cultural tapestry of arts organizations providing education programs that would be, and will be, more culturally relevant to some schools than other organizations might be. Part of our challenge will be figuring out how to facilitate those connections." Upton would like to be able to gather more data on which possible cultural partners are BIPOC-led to aid in pairing them with schools.

- Maritza Nazario of En Las Tablas Performing Arts shares her organization's difficulties in remaining partnered with CPS: "I believe that if more community organizations receive some kind of support from maybe a bigger organization or a program that supports having more community organizations into the school, that will make a big difference for schools that do not receive those services … In my community, we were one of those community organizations inside one of our local schools, and with the pandemic and not being able to teach two semesters in a row, that created problems with the vendor number, and eventually we lost it, and I think that if there is some kind of entity that could support community

organizations, that might be a way to kind of get into the system and work with CPS, who doesn't make it easy for anyone to get into and stay in the schools."

- Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) Commissioner Erin Harkey adds, referring to the data on Black students being less likely to attend a school with an "Excellent" or "Strong" staffing rating or an arts partner, "This particular point of data that you have is so incredibly important, because it is tangible and measurable in a way that we have never had before, and it's also a goal to move towards. And so in terms of what to do next … I think we could make some really substantial change just by looking at this one data point, right? And developing policy and solutions to address this one thing, rather than trying to fix the entire arts education universe. This is something we could actually do. And if we could fix this thing, it is the thing that almost fixes everything."

Goal 4 Discussion

- Alison Zehr leads the group in discussing and editing the notes document for Goal 4. ([In the previous meeting](), they assembled the corresponding notes documents for Goals 3 and 5, but left Goal 4 until this meeting, when they would have arts education representatives present.)

- Goal 4 is: "Bring arts education and creative development to Chicagoans of all backgrounds and life experiences."

- Objective 4.1 is "Advance arts and culture as a critical component in formal education for young Chicagoans"

  - The group starts by copying all of the policies suggested by deBettencourt, Upton, and Lin in their presentation beneath Goal 4.1.

  - At Erin Harkey's suggestion, they add "Investment in Teachers: from a diversity perspective, but also addressing the dwindling number of teachers," bringing up Wisdom Baty's concern about lack of teacher diversity.

  - Wisdom Baty adds to this piece, suggesting that credentials and other barriers to entry may be preventing otherwise qualified Black artist-teachers from working in schools. "There is not a lack of creative sensibilities within these Black spaces. However, there is professionalism: 'Do I have this certificate?' There are these meta-levels of why certain people are not in certain spaces."

  - Nicole Upton suggests that, if schools are to be matched to nearby culturally competent, small, BIPOC-led arts partners like Ingenuity would like to do, the arts partners may need to be incentivized to participate in the surveys that get their data into the system to make the desired matches.

  - At the suggestion of Harkey and deBettencourt, the word "formal" is changed to "in-school."

  - Enrique Morales, an artist with [Northwest Arts Connection](), shares his experience as an arts partner who worked with a CPS school that had not previously provided arts education. "It was hard, because the burden kept falling onto our organization to keep finding the funding to keep doing our programming within the school. … We were just sort of making it up as we went. There was no arts infrastructure, and then our program became a club within the school. And then it was, 'How can we make

this club become a class?'" Soon, other schools asked Morales' organization to run the same programming for their students, until they were managing the art programs at eight schools, which became unsustainable.

- ▪ Zehr responds, saying that Morales' story highlights both the need to support arts partners and the important leadership role of arts partners in helping schools design art programs that fit the school. deBettencourt suggests a "gradual release of responsibility" for the new arts program from the arts partner to the school.

- ▪ Upton shares [an Arts Partnership Process document](#) from Ingenuity that might be useful to better define responsibilities within the school / arts partner relationship.

- Objective 4.2 is "Support culturally responsive and cross-disciplinary arts education."

  - ○ Zehr suggests combining this objective with Objective 4.1, but Upton and deBettencourt disagree. DeBettencourt says that the cultural responsiveness piece of 4.2 is important enough that it should stand on its own: "Currently, the content that is in front of our students and the instruction that they are receiving is not always responsive to the identities in the room. I think it's critical to make sure that continues to be called out, and that it is indicting the entire ecosystem and not just certain points."

- Objective 4.3 is "Center creative skills in cross-disciplinary workforce development efforts"

- Objective 4.4 is "Support informal arts education for all ages and skill levels."

  - ○ Dawn Posey, an entertainment consultant and arts education advocate, makes two comments here. She suggests that general arts education classes are important in addition to elective programs: "It brings all the kids together — the shy kids to speak up and speak out, it brings the really popular kids to interact with the other kids." She also suggests that CPS should provide training or curriculum for arts teachers.

Policy Refinement

- Rachael Smith and Alison Zehr present the revisions to the draft policies for Goals 1, 2 and 3 that have been suggested by City staff who have reviewed the document. Three objectives have been moved to different locations in the document, but no wording has been changed.

- Harkey is concerned that the language used across the document is too vague and too jargon-filled. "I think the ideas are there; I think the language that we've chosen is wrong."

  - ○ She points to 1.1.E as an example: "Advance the creation of accessible information center(s)." In Harkney's view, this policy is really about "the decentralization of resources," but that meaning is being lost in jargon.

- The pillar members engage in an exercise where they rank the existing policy statements for Goals 1 and 2 from 1 to 10 on whether they are ready (1) or need more work or rewording (10). Many pillar members misunderstand the 1-10 scale, making the results hard to interpret.

- Henry Wishcamper, Director of Community Development at [Urban Juncture](#), expresses concerns that the document does not specify which departments will be responsible for this

work, or where City funding will need to be requested. Alison Zehr responds that these considerations will come to the fore in Phase 3 of the project.

- Wishcamper: "I guess the piece I'm wondering is, if there are places where we feel like the discussions we've had had more teeth than the broad policies currently have, how we should flag that we're worried that there's teeth being lost in the service of being more flexible … Some of the sections in general I worry that they have lost their teeth, and some of the policies individually within it I worry have lost their teeth."

  o Zehr says that he can flag these areas in comments in the Google Doc, and that "we don't want to lose teeth."

- Enrique Morales is concerned that, in Objective 2.2 ("Increase support for culturally responsive and locally-driven programming"), the phrase "culturally responsive" may mean different things to different communities, and this should be noted.

- Melanie Wang, Director of Development and Partnership at 3Arts, is concerned that some policies are too vaguely worded, such as 1.1.A, "Regularly gather and analyze data to determine needs and the support systems available, and identify where the gaps are." She thinks the policy statement should specify what kind of data is currently missing and what the intended impact of collecting it should be. "It seems straightforward, but almost to the point of it being so sanitized it's not really clear what we're moving towards."

Q&A / Closeout

- There are no final questions; the meeting ends with Rachael Smith and Alison Zehr encouraging everyone to write feedback into the policy refinement document, and thanking the presenters.

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RESOURCES

FEBRUARY 2022 INGENUITY DATA SNAPSHOT REPORT
[Arts Education Access in CPS: How school size, type, and student demographics impact 2019-20 Creative Schools Certification](#)

CPS ARTS EDUCATION PLAN
[2012 policy and programming blueprint for increasing access, equity and the quality of arts education provided to CPS students.](#)

CITY OF CHICAGO CULTURAL PLAN
[2012 recommendations for strengthening Chicago's cultural and creative capital.](#)

INGENUITY ARTS PARTNERSHIP PROCESS
[An interactive tool designed to help cultivate meaningful planning conversations between schools and arts partners.](#)

Next Steps

- The next meeting is April 25, 2022.

- In the meantime, pillar members are encouraged to add more feedback to the policy refinement document.