

Transforming the Lives and Education of Our Youth

A 5-Year Strategic Plan



Young Audiences/Arts for Learning – Maryland

CONTENTS

- 2 Overview and Invitation**
- 3 Vision, Mission, and Program Rationale**
- 4 Organization and Program Overview**
- 6 Strategic Planning Process Overview**
- 8 Strategic Direction – Four Pillars and Strategic Priorities**
- 20 Acknowledgment**

OVERVIEW AND INVITATION

Young Audiences is the nation’s largest arts education network and it began in Baltimore in 1950. During our 64-year history, the Maryland affiliate of Young Audiences has continually expanded its services to Maryland students, teachers, and artists to give more students the opportunity to imagine, create, and achieve. We are proud of our rich history and roots as an organization focused on exposing young people to the arts. Yet, we are increasingly excited by our evolving role as an education organization that is transforming the lives and education of young people by building communities of educators, professional artists, and parents and enabling them to help our children realize their full potential through the arts.

We are delighted to share with you our story and current successes. Most importantly, we want to share our strategic direction and invite you to partner with us in transforming the lives and education of our children. We are excited about the power of the arts to improve educational and life outcomes for students, and we are proud of our plans and the community we are building to leverage the arts to have the greatest impact possible on our students. We hope you will join us.

VISION, MISSION, AND PROGRAM RATIONALE

Vision

One day, every student in Maryland will have the opportunity to imagine, create, and realize their full potential through the arts.

Mission

Young Audiences transforms the lives and education of our youth through the arts by connecting educators, professional artists, and communities. We strive to:

- Bring more arts into Maryland schools by tapping into the talent of the artists living in our communities and helping them develop their teaching skills.
- Train teachers of all subject areas to use the arts to engage students in the learning process through arts integration.
- Ensure all schools (especially Title I schools, schools in rural communities, and schools that lack arts programs) have more access to the arts by covering the financial gap between what schools can afford and what artists need to earn.

Program Rationale: Young Audiences partners with individual teachers, principals, PTAs, entire schools, school administrators and school districts. YA is also able to partner with other community organizations, including libraries, park systems and other agencies and programs interested in helping Maryland’s children.

Our programs:

- Align with the Maryland State Curriculum Standards
- Build on 21st Century Skills, such as critical thinking
- Increase appreciation for and increase knowledge of the arts
- Enhance the curriculum through arts integration
- Increase understanding of other cultures

Most importantly, kids love our programs and our approach to learning. They often gain a greater sense of excitement and joy about school and learning. There are countless examples of “that student” - the one who never participates and seemed to hate school - who lights up while participating in a Young Audience program. With the continued support of teachers, parents, and others, the light continues to shine bright because new understanding and purpose has been found. Yes, we help to inspire a new life-long love of learning. This is why we do this work, this way.

ORGANIZATION AND PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In 1950, Young Audiences/Arts for Learning (YA) was started with the sole purpose of introducing students to classical music through performances by professional classical musicians. We were formed due to the strong convictions of one individual – Nina Collier - that our students in Baltimore deserved access to the best arts experiences available. We have grown into the nation’s largest arts education network and our Maryland affiliate has evolved into an educational organization focused on transforming the lives and education of young people in Maryland through effective partnerships with professional artists (in all disciplines), educators, parents, schools, and school districts.

We continue to provide children the opportunity to experience live performances of professional artists through our assembly programs. In 2014, we partnered with 363 schools in 24 school districts to offer 697 assemblies to 167,898 students. In addition to assemblies, we provide intensive integrated arts experiences in which students create art with professional artists, through our residency programs. Last year, 34,197 students created art with a professional artist through 7,308 residency sessions provided in 15 counties throughout the state.

In 2012, YA made a significant investment in early childhood education by affiliating with Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning in the Arts to bring their evidence-based, 16-session arts and literacy residency program into Pre-k and kindergarten classrooms. This program reaches 50 Baltimore City classrooms, impacting 1000 children annually and is a promising strategy for school readiness.

In addition to offering students direct access to professional artists, YA changed forever the day it launched the Teaching Artist Institute (TAI) and embarked on a major commitment to building the capacity of Maryland teaching artists. This statewide program, offered in partnership with AEMS Alliance, trains artists in the skills needed to partner with teachers of any subject, using their art form to creatively address the changing curriculum and standards to which teachers are held accountable. TAI fosters partnerships between teaching artists and teachers, requiring artists to collaboratively plan and teach with their assigned teacher partner. Through this collaboration, TAI is helping us develop a community of teachers who appreciate the gifts a teaching artist brings to the classroom and how the arts can be used to engage children in learning. In fact, while TAI is not designed to be professional development for teachers, teachers report that the arts integration practices it fosters reinvigorate their passion for teaching. TAI has helped position YA, as a respected and valued arts integration resource for artists, teachers, and schools - in addition to

Young Audiences – Arts for Learning – Maryland
5-Year Strategic Plan (FY2015 – FY2019)

its role as a valuable resource for assembly and residency programs. Through TAI, YA has trained 102 artists. Artists from sixteen YA affiliates across the US have come to Maryland to experience TAI.

YA's most recent endeavor is the launch of our district-wide partnerships, which bring integrated arts education to more students across the state. In 2014 we have partnerships with four Maryland school districts. Each partnership is customized to the unique needs of the district. While each partnership is slightly different in terms of the district department with which we work, the programs we offer and the age group we serve, they share a common commitment to providing students with a high quality arts integrated educational experience. These partnerships all have a dual focus on strengthening educational outcomes for students and developing educator capacity to utilize arts integration in the classroom. We have observed that this approach to education is more engaging for students, creates opportunities to invest in students who may be lower performing or disengaged from learning, and leads to improved outcomes for all students.

There is a strong connection between high quality arts experiences and improved academic and life outcomes for students. Knowing this, we are focused on utilizing the arts as a tool to help improve learning across all subjects and build 21st century skills. Additionally, we hope to utilize the arts to breathe joy, color, inspiration, and hope into the school day. While these words are not often associated with school, they should be. Eighth grader Nathalie A. illustrates how YA artists can fill the school day with joy: *“The day you performed Two Pearls was the best thing that ever happened to me at school. The poem really touched me.”*

Through the arts we strive to instill a lifelong commitment to learning and self-development in every person touched by our work. Our hope is that one day, every student in Maryland will have the opportunity to imagine, create, and realize their full potential through the arts.

We are honored to serve the young people of Maryland, proud of our partnerships across the state, and appreciate all the artists and educators we work with every day. Even with our significant growth and expansion since our early days in 1950, there are still too many children who are not benefiting from these types of art experiences across the state. Even with the growing research demonstrating the educational benefits of high quality arts experiences; too many people view such experiences as nice extras but an unnecessary addition to the school day. These truths, alongside our desire to have an even more meaningful impact on the lives of the children of Maryland, drive this five-year plan.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

Young Audiences develops strategic plans for two reasons:

- First, to engage the YA community in critical conversations about the needs of Maryland’s young people and schools. By gaining a better understanding of these needs, we are able to use the strategic planning process to determine how to best focus our energy and resources to bring about the most significant positive change for young people through the arts.
- Second, to provide YA with a North Star to guide its decision-making. As YA encounters opportunities and choices, this North Star will help the organization’s leadership evaluate and prioritize opportunities.

YA’s strategic plans do not sit on a shelf. YA achieved 14 of the 16 goals in its last strategic plan and many of the accomplishments featured in the next section are a direct result of developing and using that plan. At the same time, we recognize that valuable opportunities arise, which may not be anticipated in the plan, and that we must be nimble lest rigid adherence to the plan limit our ability to effectively pursue our mission. Expanding our focus to include early childhood education by affiliating with Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning is a perfect example of an opportunity we did not envision as part of our future while we were developing our last strategic plan. Ultimately, after we assessed this opportunity against our plan, we chose to move forward to take advantage of a unique opportunity.

In preparing to develop this strategic plan, we worked with two consultants from May-September 2013 to conduct an external and internal review of the organization. These scans included:

- Interviews with thirty people in the areas of education, arts/culture, and philanthropic community to better understand the issues impacting our community and their views on YA.
- A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis with our board, staff and artists.
- A landscape analysis for the education space in Maryland, including key influencers, major initiatives and enduring challenges.
- Surveying schools that partner with us and schools and artists that don’t.
- A focus group of YA artists.

Staff and board leadership reviewed this information and used it to design conversations for a strategic planning retreat in January 2014. Fifty people

**Young Audiences – Arts for Learning – Maryland
5-Year Strategic Plan (FY2015 – FY2019)**

participated in a daylong retreat, including board members, staff members, artists, teachers, organizational funders and school administrators. We spent the day dreaming bigger dreams for the organization and for the young people of Maryland.

Following the retreat, we convened working groups that identified six strategic areas we wanted to further explore. In February 2014, YA formed five working groups, each tasked with developing a five-year vision and strategic goals for one of these areas. Sixty staff and board members, artists, educators, donors and administrators participated in one of the following groups: Teaching Artist Institute, Building/Sharing Evidence, School District Arts Integration Partnerships, Parent Engagement, and Re-envisioning Assemblies.

The working groups concluded their meetings two months later after which the staff and board leadership had a series of conversations, and made some difficult choices about what to include and not include in the plan, and how to tie the plan together and estimate the plan's costs.

More than 300 people volunteered their time to help YA understand the needs of children and schools and envision its future; thank you. We won't let you down!

STRATEGIC DIRECTION – FOUR PILLARS AND FOUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Four Pillars

There are four pillars that undergird all that Young Audiences does: **(1) High Quality Programs, (2) Expansive Student Reach, (3) Financial Sustainability, and (4) A Strong YA Community.** Every day we strive to strike the right balance between providing more student access, maintaining high quality programs, and ensuring our financial sustainability. Over the last five years we have made unprecedented progress across all of these areas, despite being in one of the worst economic periods in US history. Here are a few examples:

Programmatic Growth: Our outreach has grown from 3,264 to 9,039 individual program experiences, a 177% increase. We have expanded our focus to include early childhood education and teacher professional development, becoming a national resource for artist training, and have emerged as a respected leader in Maryland and nationally for arts integration.

Title I Partnership: Our partnership with the Title I office in Harford County, now in its third year, is designed to improve student achievement through the arts and is like no other in the country. The evidence we are collecting has the potential to greatly influence the future of education, specifically the role of teaching artists in schools.

Growth in High Poverty and Rural Schools: Our reach into high poverty and rural schools – which traditionally have less access to the arts - has grown by 66% and 12% respectively. All students are benefiting from deeper opportunities to learn from teaching artists. We now provide 214,550 student learning hours annually, a 58% increase over the last five years.

Budget Growth: YA's budget has doubled from \$1.2M to \$2.4M, with contributed income also doubling. YA has significantly grown its individual giving, including the number of major donors and multiyear commitments - all essential to sustainability. YA now has cash reserves that are roughly 20% of its fixed operating costs and \$76,000 in board designated funds for strategic investments.

What makes this success possible? Undoubtedly, the people and community that make up Young Audiences. In the last five years, YA has grown its community more effectively and better engaged this community of artists, board, staff, teachers, administrators and funders.

The Next Five Years:

Our vision remains the same as it did five years ago: “One day, every student in Maryland will have the opportunity to imagine, to create, and to realize their full potential through the arts.” Our mission also remains unchanged: “To transform the lives and education of youth through the arts.” What has changed is that now, more than any other time in our history, Young Audiences is poised to realize this vision and achieve this mission for all Maryland children.

We know that in order to achieve our mission of transforming lives and education we need to focus on four key areas:

1. Integrating the arts into classroom learning - beyond the art and music room – is a powerful way to engage and motivate kids in school and can lead to larger scale school transformation and improve individual student performance.

Arts integration is a way of teaching that uses the arts to help students access, relate to, and master non-arts material such as math, reading and science, in a more authentic and engaging way. It is an incredible tool to fuel student investment and motivation. Arts integration helps teachers find new ways to reach students, particularly students they have struggled to reach. These moments - when a teacher realizes the true potential of a child - can be transforming for the teacher *and* the child. This kind of integrated learning also naturally allows students to stretch and flex the muscles in their brain that often remain untested in the traditional classroom but are essential to success in work and life - critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication.

Over the last five years, we have seen tremendous success in our arts integrated programs - particularly when this is done through a school system partnership and focus on teacher professional development. We are passionate about our arts integrated professional development work and poised to take it to a larger scale, by partnering with more schools and districts and reaching more teachers than ever before.

2. The more we invest in our artists and more deeply involve them in our work, the better the work becomes.

Our organization was truly transformed the day we launched the Teaching Artist Institute and began to do much more to develop and support our teaching artists. Recruiting new teaching artists to the field, training and supporting all of our artists, and building a much larger community of teaching artists and teachers to collaborate and learn from each other is essential to every single aspect of our plan. In fact, without more highly skilled teaching artists (i.e. artists

**Young Audiences – Arts for Learning – Maryland
5-Year Strategic Plan (FY2015 – FY2019)**

who understand the school curriculum, who can integrate their art form across this curriculum, who can effectively partner with teachers to plan, implement and assess their lessons, and who can train teachers in arts integration, while also being able to work with a variety of age groups and settings), achieving many aspects of this plan will not be possible.

3. We know that to achieve any kind of large scale impact on education we must have evidence that our programs make a difference to children, to teachers, and to school communities. We must find effective ways to gather, create and use this evidence to influence decisions and policies that impact student learning.

4. We want to strengthen and expand our programs and the settings in which we work. YA has a broad base of programs and ways we work with schools – from assemblies, to residencies, to teacher trainings – and in different settings including early learning environments and out of school time. We must ensure that our existing programs are poised to help us have the greatest impact, while experimenting with new ways we can use the arts to help young people realize their full potential.

Strategic Directions

Over the next five years we plan to significantly increase Young Audiences’ transformative impact on students and on education, and to accomplish this by:

1. Expanding our school district arts integration partnerships
2. Investing in and growing our teaching artist community
3. Building and sharing evidence of our impact
4. Strengthening and expanding our programs

1. Expanding Our School District Arts Integration Partnerships

We aspire to impact the education of every child in Maryland. To accomplish this, we must partner with school districts across the state in addition to partnering with individual schools as we have done for many years. District level partnerships will enable us to more efficiently work to strengthen student learning throughout Maryland, by enabling us to align with district level priorities so that our work is most relevant to the daily activities and needs of teachers and students in each district. District level partnerships will enable us to access a broader array of funding sources, many of which are not available at the individual school level. To date, these partnerships have allowed us to have an exponential and enduring impact on children – even after the artist leaves the building – because these programs have given teachers the skills and capacity to regularly integrate the arts into their teaching.

Vision Statement: Young Audiences will revolutionize teacher practice and fuel student achievement through district level arts integration partnerships that foster artist – teacher collaborations.

Goals – In five years, Young Audiences will:

1. Increase its highly trained teaching artist roster by 200% with 30% of the growth representing geographically underserved districts.
2. Cultivate eight (8) more District Level Arts Integration partnerships for a total of 12, representing 50% of Maryland’s school districts.

What this work looks like in 2014: We have four school district level partnerships (Baltimore City, Anne Arundel, Harford and Cecil Counties). While each partnership is unique in terms of the department we work with, the programs we offer, and the age group we serve, they each share several common elements: Each of these partnerships employ an arts integration strategy, designed to achieve a specific academic outcome, and include teacher professional development as a key element.

One district level administrator noted: *“When I visit a classroom that has a teacher who has spent eight weeks working with a YA artist..., I see that her love for teaching has been rekindled. The artist has given the teacher permission to let go of the manual and sing with her students. They are role-playing, using incredibly rich language... and guess what? It is exciting!”*

Two existing partnership models that could be replicated to other districts:

Harford County Public Schools' Title I Office--The SMART program--is like no other in the country. SMART is being implemented in all five Title I elementary schools, with YA providing ongoing professional development to teachers in an effort to improve teacher practice in arts integration and student achievement. By 2016, HCPS will have data to help us understand how students who have teachers participating in SMART compare to those whose teachers are not in the program. Measures include academic outcomes, attendance rates, and discipline referrals. This data has the potential to change the way people view the arts and artists in schools and will fuel interest from other school districts in partnering with YA.

Baltimore City Public Schools Office of Early Learning partners with YA to increase school readiness through YA/Wolf Trap's 16 session arts and literacy-based residencies with embedded teacher professional development. An external evaluation of the Wolf Trap residency shows that children who participated in this program experienced significant gains across multiple developmental domains, as compared to children who did not participate. In 2013-2014, YA worked with 50 PreK and K teachers who reported significant improvement in the district's high priority teaching practices, such as creating more opportunities to ask open-ended questions and delivering more engaging read alouds; they also reported positive changes in students' reading comprehension and interest in reading. With these outcomes and MD's increased focus on early childhood education, we anticipate that other school districts will want to partner with YA to bring this resource their students and teachers.

2. Investing in and Growing Our Teaching Artist Community

For YA to achieve its vision of impacting the education of every child in Maryland, we must create new ways to support the recruitment and training of many more teaching artists each year.

Recruiting new artists to the field of teaching artistry is key to this plan. The traditional ways that YA has recruited and trained artists will no longer be sufficient. YA needs to develop partnerships to increase the number of potential artists in the TAI "pipeline," so it can increase the number of artists it trains annually. YA must help the next generation of artists understand teaching artistry as a viable and meaningful career choice. This can be accomplished by enhancing recognition for the field of teaching artistry, and by helping the education community appreciate the unique skills and capacities a trained teaching artist brings to the classroom.

We learned through implementation of our last strategic plan that the more we do to support and involve our artists and educator partners in our work, the better our work is. YA needs to do more to nurture collaboration and community among artists and teachers who have gone through our TAI training. We have worked hard over the last five years to foster a community of impassioned people. We are now in a position to leverage this community, to impact greater change in education!

**Young Audiences – Arts for Learning – Maryland
5-Year Strategic Plan (FY2015 – FY2019)**

***Vision Statement:* Young Audiences will transform education by developing exemplary teaching artists in collaborative communities that foster joyful and inspired learning environments.**

Goals – In five years Young Audiences will:

1. Train 100 artists annually by partnering with diverse artistic communities, school districts and colleges and universities to expand TAI and develop new training and teacher/artist collaboration opportunities.
2. Triple the size of the TAI faculty and broaden it to include an eclectic group of master teaching artists from existing and emerging fields, teachers and curriculum specialists. This will enable YA to increase the number of TAI seminars it offers annually and to develop new teaching artist/teacher training, coaching and collaboration opportunities that serve different areas of the state.
3. Develop a certification program for teaching artists that provides schools and educators with an assurance that the artists they bring into the schools are well qualified, thereby establishing more credibility and demand for teaching artists in educational settings. This, in turn, should attract more professional artists to pursue teaching artistry.

What this work looks like in 2014. Seven years ago, Young Audiences launched TAI and made a significant investment in the development of its teaching artists, as well as any teaching artist in the field. We knew if we could help artists understand the curriculum that teachers and schools were held accountable for and we could help them use their art form to help teachers teach this curriculum, teachers and schools would be more eager to partner with artists and children would have greater access to artists and arts integration as part of their education. And this turned out to be true!

As a result of TAI, YA is a greater resource for schools. We can now develop customized arts integrated programs due to our cadre of artists who can use their art form to address school curriculum in an engaging manner. Partnerships like the one with the Harford County Public Schools Title I Office would not have been possible without TAI. Many administrators prefer to bring only TAI trained artists into their schools and the TAI trained artists on YA’s roster are most in demand.

YA has developed five different TAI seminars that address artists at different stages of development, including a beginner’s course, “Bringing Your Art into the Classroom” and an advanced course offered after an Arts Integration training, “Designing Professional Development for Teachers.” We also have designed TAI seminars that address new curriculum, including the Common Core, 21st Century Skills and STEM. YA offers one of these seminars a year, with 20-25 artists who are

**Young Audiences – Arts for Learning – Maryland
5-Year Strategic Plan (FY2015 – FY2019)**

selected to participate out of a pool of applicants. At the completion of the program, each artist will have developed his or her own standards-based artist-in-residence program that has been piloted in a classroom in partnership with a teacher. Over 100 artists have been trained through TAI, many of whom have completed more than one seminar. Twenty-five artists who completed TAI have been added to the YA roster and most YA roster artists have completed at least one TAI seminar.

TAI has helped raise the bar for teaching artistry in this state and has created more opportunities for teaching artists to impact education. Developing a certification program for teaching artists would further advance the field, bringing more credibility and recognition to TAI/YA and the artists who achieve certification, thereby creating incentives for artists to seek certification, which increases the number of artists in the pipeline.

3. Building and Sharing Evidence of Our Impact

While most people agree that student access to high quality arts experiences is beneficial, many do not understand the direct role that the arts can play in student engagement, attendance, behavior, overall academic performance and school culture. Therefore, when time and money are limited, many choose to fund other opportunities over the arts. In an era of decreasing school budgets and a continued focus on tested areas like reading and math, time dedicated to the arts has steadily decreased, with high poverty schools suffering the largest cuts. To ensure that ALL children have the opportunity to imagine, create and realize their full potential through the arts, YA must support key decision-makers in understanding the pivotal role of the arts. Used effectively, the arts are essential to school improvement and a child's success.

YA must gather evidence to demonstrate this simple truth to school principals, parents, and other decision makers. We will also need to develop an effective method of sharing this evidence with these key decision makers. There is increasing pressure among public and private funders to ensure that scarce resources are spent on strategies and cost effective programs with proven results. As we increase our presence in the educational arena, we must hold ourselves to an even higher standard for the educational impact and outcomes of our programs.

***Vision Statement:* All YA programs will be evidence informed and we will measure their transformative impact on students, educators and school communities. We will broadly share the evidence of our impact so that the arts are recognized as an essential part of Maryland education.**

Goals – In five years Young Audiences will:

1. Ensure that all YA programs are annually evaluated internally to measure impact, and that all staff, board, and artists will utilize this data to inform their work.
2. Partner with external researchers to complete a study to demonstrate YA’s impact on students, teachers and/or school communities.

What this work looks like in 2014: Historically, YA has gathered feedback on the quality of our work. For example, YA typically asks school representatives to complete an evaluation form after an assembly or residency. The form requests feedback on the quality of the experience, which helps us monitor quality improve our programs. Increasingly, YA is using pre and post surveys to document self-reported changes in participants, including TAI participants or teachers participating in a professional development experiences.

We are now asking teachers to document changes in behaviors, attitudes, knowledge or skills in their students, and we are able to use this information to communicate the effectiveness of our programs to principals, parents, funders and other key decision makers. We also capture and share testimonials from students, teachers and parents who have been impacted by our work.

4. Strengthening and Expanding Our Programs

As we significantly grow our reach and artist community, we must maintain and, where possible, strengthen the quality of our existing programs – ensuring the highest impact and school utilization. We want to ascertain the best ways to transform more lives and the education of children through the arts. To do this, we will focus on four areas:

- A. Re-envision “the assembly” so that schools see greater value in this experience and more children have opportunities to experience the arts from professional artists.
- B. Grow the early learning/Wolf Trap program so that more students and teachers benefit.
- C. Find ways to use our programs to increase and strengthen parent involvement.
- D. Find ways to better use technology in all that we do.

A. Re-envision “the assembly” so that schools see greater value in this experience and more children have opportunities to experience the arts from professional artists.

**Young Audiences – Arts for Learning – Maryland
5-Year Strategic Plan (FY2015 – FY2019)**

Goal: In five years, YA will see a 30% increase in assemblies, resulting in more children having access to these experiences.

YA was founded more than 60 years ago on the belief that children benefit from being exposed to the arts through live concerts by professional classical musicians. Over time, school interest in assemblies has significantly declined. At their height, in the 1990's, YA provided 1800 assemblies; in 2014 YA provided 697. We believe the decline in assembly demand is being driven by academic and financial pressures at the school and district level. With limited dollars and time and many competing priorities and programs, schools are choosing to allocate their time and money to other areas, including other types of YA programs.

YA assemblies have proven over many years to be one of the best ways to expose children and schools to the arts and the best method for reaching as many students as possible. If we truly want to reach every child in MD, assemblies must be part of this solution. We are dedicated to reimagining “the assembly” so that it advances the academic goals of schools, while creating unique moments of inspiration, expression and creativity, and therefore becomes an essential element of a school and principal’s plan/program.

B. Grow the early learning/Wolf Trap program so that more students and teachers benefit

Goal: In five years, YA will increase its outreach to teachers and children (birth through kindergarten) by 100%, both in Baltimore and beyond, through Wolf Trap programs.

More than three decades ago, Wolf Trap the National Park for the performing arts, made a commitment to early childhood education. With the development of the Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts, Wolf Trap sought to introduce students to the performing arts by including artists in early learning settings. Today this early learning program is a 16-session evidence-and arts-based residency model that supports literacy and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) skills in young learners.

In FY13, YA became the Maryland Wolf Trap affiliate, exclusively delivering the program to Maryland Schools. In the 2013-2014 school year, we delivered this program to 50 pre-K and kindergarten classrooms in eighteen (18) Baltimore City Schools, while training four additional artists in this residency model. The YA-Wolf Trap residency helps children gain academic and social skills through the arts, and provides quality professional development for the teacher in integration of the arts

**Young Audiences – Arts for Learning – Maryland
5-Year Strategic Plan (FY2015 – FY2019)**

into their instruction so that our impact on children continues after the artist leaves the classroom.

Terri Core, recent Pre-K Education Manager for Baltimore City Public Schools' OEL wrote: "Wolf Trap programs reinvigorate our teachers to instruct students beyond the paper and pencil. Teachers learn new strategies through music, dance, and theatre that scaffolds the rigorous instructional standards that the Common Core demands, all while students engage completely in the enthusiasm of the artist and teacher working together on lessons that leverage what each does best."

There is growing national and local attention on the importance of early childhood and more interest in expanding quality early learning opportunities in Maryland. Research studies of this program indicate it positively impacts multiple developmental domains of young children and this evidence should be leveraged to expand children's access to this program.

Due to the extensive nature of the 16-session residency, schools typically cannot afford this program which costs \$1800 per classroom, without ample financial assistance. Baltimore City schools typically only cover 30% of the program and YA must raise the rest. Significantly expanding this program's reach and ensuring access to those classrooms that need it most will require significant funds.

C. Find ways to use our programs to increase and strengthen parent involvement

Goal: Young Audience will incorporate tailored parent engagement strategies into its programs and train artists to implement these strategies.

Transforming children's lives and education, is best achieved when parents are engaged in our work. In Baltimore and across the country, there is a growing realization that broader efforts to improve education results can be achieved only through deeper and more effective engagement of parents. School systems have become more focused on expanding their parent engagement efforts to advance academic goals because research reveals that schools and children themselves are far more likely to be successful when parents are effectively engaged.

Despite significant time and effort devoted to parent outreach, many schools serving students living in poverty struggle to successfully involve parents in their child's learning at school and at home. This is a significant and stubborn obstacle to closing the achievement gap and we believe YA can help.

**Young Audiences – Arts for Learning – Maryland
5-Year Strategic Plan (FY2015 – FY2019)**

As part of the community interviews YA conducted prior to the retreat, some thought leaders in education suggested YA consider helping schools increase parent involvement through the arts. In recent years YA has wondered what its impact could be if we had an intentional focus on parent engagement and if it would help further our mission of transforming the lives and education of Maryland children. Principals are increasingly finding that YA arts experiences, particularly a student performance/exhibit that happens at the end of an artist-in-residence program, are effective at bringing parents into the school building and often produce very favorable results. Parents want to see their child in the spotlight and are often curious about the special arts program or artist their child has been talking about at home. In the best of circumstances, these experiences can help parents see the potential in their child and their parental role to help ensure that this potential is realized, while also building rapport and trust between school personnel and parents. We believe this can be further leveraged to make a lasting difference.

Yet, YA already has a broad programmatic focus and we have not achieved our outreach goals tied to existing programs. With limited staff capacity and resources, it may prove difficult to extend our focus to parent engagement. Therefore, embedding parent engagement into existing programs may be our best strategy.

D. Find ways to better use technology in all that we do.

Goal: YA will expand its community to include individuals and businesses with technology expertise who will help us identify and pilot new ways to use technology that increases our impact and reach into schools.

Technology is playing an ever increasing role in classrooms. For instance, many schools use Smart Boards, interactive, digital whiteboards that use touch detection. Some schools are moving to “reversed classroom” models of learning, in which students learn new material via video and the internet at home and master those skills by doing what would traditionally be homework at school. Many teachers are opting for online training courses. How can YA support these efforts in schools? Are there ways we can better use technology and personal electronic devices to help artists and students connect and create and share art? Can technology provide solutions to YA’s ongoing challenges like our limited reach into rural areas, to gather and share evidence of our impact, to raise/change our profile, to improve the efficiency of the administrative support required to deliver programs, and to effectively connect with/engage parents?

While YA has many ideas about the future role of technology in our work, YA’s current technology and its lack of “tech” expertise on the staff and board was raised

**Young Audiences – Arts for Learning – Maryland
5-Year Strategic Plan (FY2015 – FY2019)**

as an area of weakness during the planning process. YA recognized, before it could develop specific long-term technology solutions, that it first needed to find the right set of people - with education technology skills, expertise and connections - to guide this work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you to the many YA community members who contributed to this strategic plan. We are deeply indebted to this wonderful community of educators (teachers, principals, administrators, and higher education professionals), professional artists, funders, parents, board members and staff who are committed to transforming the lives and education of all Maryland students through the arts. We appreciate all of the time and hard work you put into developing this plan. The time you shared being interviewed, participating in focus groups, completing surveys, being fully engaged during our strategic planning retreat, leading and participating in work groups, sharing ideas and thoughts one-on-one, reviewing and re-reviewing ideas to ensure we got them right, was all needed. We are grateful for this gift of time. Your incredible creativity, vision, guidance, and feedback is what made this plan possible. We look forward to our continued partnership to actualize this plan on behalf of the children we serve every day.

We want to take a moment to thank the Strategic Planning Committee for designing and shepherding this process and our board of directors, staff and artists who served on strategic planning working groups. Also, thank you Pat Egan and Lisa Kane for all that you did, including developing much of the background and landscape information that helped drive our plan. This information and data was invaluable.

Finally and most importantly, we want to thank YOU, yes YOU for taking the time to read our strategic plan. We are excited about the future this plans lays out for the young people of Maryland. And with your partnership and support we are confident it will become their reality. We look forward to working with you in the service of our Maryland children.

Appreciatively yours,

Stacie Sanders Evans – Executive Director

Bill Buckner – Strategic Planning Committee Chair/Outgoing Board President