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John F. Kennedy Center for the Arts
VOICES FROM THE FIELD: TRANSITION AND THE ARTS
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>> Welcome to the October installment of our VSA webinar series which comes from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Arts.
I'm Emily Thiell, the program coordinator of special education here at the center and I will be your webinar moderator.
If you would like to view live-stream captioning of this webinar, you can follow the link on the slide and the chat box of the control panel on the right side of your screen. I would like to introduce you to cisco WebEx broadcast center.
Up here in the chat box, you can select captioning from the control panel on the top right of your window. If you need to leave early, you leave it by clicking on the X in the upper left-hand corner. A recording will be available afterwards so you can catch up on any parts you missed.
You can connect to the audio portion of the webinar through your telephone or through your computer's microphone and speakers. Select the option that works best for you. If you're using your telephone, please make sure you mute your computer speakers.
You can submit comments, questions or answers to questions using the Q&A option, which you can select from the top panel.
Please note this is different from the chat box and allows moderators to view your question. Please make sure your question is directed to all panelists. If you prefer to speak rather than typing, click on the raise your hand icon which can be found in our view on participants panel.
I will mute the microphone at the appropriate time. Much of today's presentation will be conducted over screen share. If you would like to adjust your view by zooming in or out, you can click on the magnifying glasses and you can also expand your view to full screen. At the end of today's presentation, there will be an opportunity to ask questions about the material. Given the very limited amount of time available to us, we respectfully ask that you would hold questions about individual students and focused questions on the broader implication of Jill's work. During the question and answer time, please raise your hand if you would like to speak or type your question into the

Q&A box.

Within the week we will send out a follow-up e-mail with a link to the recording of today's presentation. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation and a copy of the webinar transcript. This means you can go back and watch the recording and review supplemental materials in addition to any notes you take during the webinar itself.

Our next "Voices from the Field: Transition and the Arts" lightning talk will take place on October 10 at 12:30 p.m.

I invite you to connect with us using #VSAwebinar. On Facebook we are VSA International. And on Twitter, we are VSAINTL. We would love to engage with you. And with that, I hand it over to today's presenter, Jill.

>> JILL SCHEIBLER: Give me one moment.

>> JILL SCHEIBLER: Thank you for your patience. It took me a moment. Is everyone seeing a PowerPoint screen?

>> Yes, we can see it.

>> JILL SCHEIBLER: OK. Thank you so much.

[Laughter]

I had a few technical difficulties today. But I'll try to keep this moving along to stay on time. I'm very pleased to discuss a project I undertook with my colleagues where a supported community arts studio that serves adults with disabilities. We're in Baltimore. We were excited to be able to produce new programming for -- contract with the VSA and the rosemary Kennedy initiative. I'll speak briefly about the programming that emerged from our desire to extend successful programming we developed for adults over the last seven years with younger individuals who were looking to explore and develop relevant skills for pursuing careers in the arts after graduation from school.

So I'm going to spend a portion of my time talking about make studio in order to give you a better sense of the programming that we have adapted for younger individuals with disabilities.

Make studio was founded in 2010 and we're an inclusive arts center, meaning we produce programming that is accessible to individuals of all abilities, including workshops, auditions, screenings, you name it, throughout the year. But our core program is the studio program specifically for working artists. We currently serve 30 adults in this program. And they come from throughout the Baltimore metro area. Our focus is really celebrating self-determination throughout our program. Our staff comes with different skill sets gained with working with special education settings as well as being working artists and designers. And we really put the studio first in what we do in order to really focus on individual's development as artists.

A core piece of our programming is we focus on high quality materials and we keep exhibitions ask sales of work to the extent artists wish to sell the work at the center of what we do. We do a variety of things which we'll talk about to encourage [Away from mic] in the model of what we call progressive arts studios. Formerly know as arts administration for persons with disabilities. Developed in the late '70s to early '80s. These programs vary quite a bit, but at their core, all have their focus on developing competencies,.

So that individuals who work in arts programs are able to take the skills they've learned and work to cultivate broader acceptance of all people with disabilities in their

communities.

Something that we think about at make studio because of the genre of art our artists produce often is characterized as, which would be outsider art. Is taking a corrective approach to that view. Really thinking about the way that creativity breeds both independence and interdependence. That people who make art in arts centers are really radically connected to their communities. Shaking up this stereotype of people with disabilities as being isolated and this idea that outsider art is made in isolation. What we found is that people with disabilities like artists of all ability levels, really bring in their concerns and the concerns of the wider community into their work, and they they create messages they want to share visually with others too.

So something that is underlaid our program for all people that we work with and particularly for thinking about transitioning to transition-aged youth, is that we want to create experiences that are an active process of thinking about programming that is thoughtful and ambitious and increasing dependence validation and opportunity.

So a little more about make studio and our 30 artists to set the scene. Our artists are artists first. We focus on the studio and make studio. And we have individuals who come to us on different schedules, mostly for crowd control to work on our studio. Others develop projects. So here are a few examples of artists at work doing everything from still-life, working from live reptiles to doing work based on popular characters, to doing portraits and you name it. Whatever the artist desires. And our staff are there to facilitate and support in making decisions. Our program is set in the building that you see here called the Schwing Art Center allows us to have a dedicated gallery space as well as a flexible and acceptable workspace. So we took that into devising our program, having youth come to work in the studio setting and have a break from their school settings.

Artists work on self-developed projects that range from clay work, mixed media sculpture. We try to provide the necessary basic set of tools so that artists can work on their own imagination. Something with our transition age program was to pick up on a key piece of what happens in our studio and that is kind of working the edges of someone's current capabilities. Zack on the left and Margie on the right are sharing projects that allow them to experience materials that they never used before and to work on bigger scale.

And these are artists that although they've been making art for a very long time, had not felt bold enough for whatever reason, to work in the media that you see here.

But they found great success in doing that. So thinking about challenging one's expectations and pushing boundaries, pushing the edges is something we have brought into our transition-age program. I'll pause here for a second and do a quick time check. OK. Here's Zack once again in an example of a staged project, which is something that we emulated in our transition based program, where he worked on a comic over a long period of time with the support from one of our staff members, our studio manager, in order to explore feelings about being a young man with autism. This is something that he took and shared and was able to have published and speak about in public. So again, this is another example of thinking about pushing the edges of capabilities and bridging between one's inner artistic and creative idea and things that one wants to express and connecting with others around shared feelings and interests.

I'm going to for the sake of time, just move past this. The next couple slides are some examples of ways that our artists engage with community members via the Internet, on our artist blog and in the community at different artists and residence experiences and exhibitions speaking with visitors. These are things we also brought into our transition program. Theoretically we've been inspired by artist based social inclusion. The idea of building interdependence that people with and without disabilities benefit from connect with one other and reliance of a sedges of community -- sense of community with each other.

So moving to our program, specifically to tell you what we really keyed in on for this age group is taking that studio experience that open studio experience, that we utilize with adults and distilling it down into a more time limited experience that was a bit more structure. To bridge the structure of the school day with a more openness of one's adult work schedule, or in this case working as an artist in the studio.

So we engendered to create time-limited workshops in which students could be engaged in learning new skills or interests, or enhancing existing artistic skills. We did that in such a way that through mentorship with our current artists as well as support from other guest artists, and our staff members, we focused on incrementally creating projects that can be completed in a short period of time. That involve challenging problem-solving abilities and challenging existing communication and social skills. Things that would really be highlighted in future career development for these students. So young people would come in groups. I think our youngest student was actually 13. And stayed for half day or full-day sessions. A semi-structured experience as I mentioned before. A team teaching approach as I mentioned and our adult artists were there throughout providing adder talks and -- artist talks and demonstrations as well as being there as a resource for the students who came to our space. And then culminating exhibition experiences for all students that participate in our gallery.

We made a conscious effort to survey the goals, needs and preferences of all participating students before they came to the space so we would have at the ready, materials needed and an idea of the extra supports that might be needed so each student can function as autonomously as possible, but with their teaching team while they were in our space.

Everyone can see where their media of choice was. Students would make individual choices of what they would focus on while with us. On our side, our teaching teams, we worked out the stages of projects. Picking up from the example of Zack with the comic. Thinking about an ambitious goal, a project that would be a little bit outside the student's comfort zone and what were the stages, setting the stages that would be needed to complete that project in the time we have available. We also pre-prepared media stations to facilitate this and throughout the workdays we would promote behaviors that encouraged a productive shared working environment and really tolerating others' preferences and particularities in working in a studio environment was a key focus for the individuals who ended upcoming to our workshops.

We also had opportunities to practice constructive critique, so informally and also at the end of each day in a more structured traditional critique setting. And we really spent a lot of time working with students thinking about the process of their art-making as well as what the final product would be like.

One student was very interested in doing comic space projects. But never completed a full comic.

Ultimately work towards a graphic novel.

One of our resident artists, Gary and on the right is one of the attending students, and they worked closely together during his workshop experience.

This scene, there's two students who participated in one workshop. And something that was a wonderful surprise to us that we wanted to share with others was that students who tended -- together who didn't know each other before offered a lot of support to one another. That's something we want to look towards in future programming. The student on the left is working on a project in cardboard, in support of the student on the right who had chosen that as anonym projects, to get over some -- as an initial project to get over some of the anxiety of being in a new space. The student on the left chose to work with him in tandem with similar materials in a show of support which helped both of them to integrate into the studio environment that day.

Moving ahead, some students quirking on clay -- working on clay. We did have some lucky coincidences in terms of what materials students in different groups really wanted to focus on, so that we could really provide a lot of support, all at once. Small groups of students as well.

And then lastly in this example, this is one of the exhibition opportunities that we had for one of the groups. The young woman in this photo had been working in three dimensions at home for quite some time. But had not really been able to complete a project. So this was very satisfying for her family as well as her, to have a finished piece that she could let others see.

And looks like I have a question. I'm almost through. Maybe I'll go ahead and go through this last slide.

I'll give this last slide and then take any other questions that may have popped up.

The key lessons learned were that timing of the workshops and timing of projects within them was key. Going from a sort of open type of schedule with our adults to doing something with younger people involved a lot of thinking about what's going to be the most productive experience that is developmentally appropriate, work in a more unstructured way as an adult, post-graduation. We really relied on strong partnerships with adult agencies we work with as well as schools. And within our teaching teams that emerged to work with the young people, but also to kind of set up conversations between adult agencies and families to help them in the transition process as a whole. We thought was a really nice silver lining as well.

We established or aim to establish good communication with families from the outset when we were enrolling students in this programming. And to manage expectations, because our community setting is so different from a lot of the other settings and the school settings that families have previously worked with for their children. Throughout the experience, we really wanted to set high standards and model professionalism so that student would have the sense that process is still important for an artist's development, but that if you're looking to exit your work and -- exhibit and sell your work, to be thinking what standards of quality can be set so that you'll achieve that sale or achieve that recognition that you would like to for your end product.

Then we had plans A., B, and C., most notably for thinking about how we would offer

this program in the summer versus in the spring, when vacations and other kinds of scheduling disruptions were impacting the participation of students.

So in that regard, we went to a more summer camp model for summer sessions to better serve families.

So hopefully I have not run too over.

Lastly, just wanted to read our contact information and point everyone to make studio's social media, tell us more what we're doing with transition-aged students and what our adults are doing. We have an artist blog, save your faves.org. That and our Instagram feed are really our artist conduit to the community 24/7, so I encourage you to check those out. Thanks so much.

>> We have now reached the question and answer portion of your webinar. Now is the time to enter a question into the Q&A box or raise your hand.

Other community arts programs on providing this kind of career development for transition-age artists with disabilities, what are some core values you would suggest all programs of this type have?

>> JILL SCHEIBLER: I would say core values -- that's a good way to frame it. I think that really celebrating individual voice and individual aspirations is extremely important. Something that we learned through working mostly with adults, but many of whom are young adults who have just sort of passed out of that transition age period, is that sometimes in the career development process, the job planning process, individual aspirations and goals kind of can take a bit of a back seat to what seems realistic and practical.

And some of the adults we worked with, that's brought a lot of frustration and some resistance, understandably, hesitancy, about trying different things later on. We really feel like valuing that individual goal, that individual aspiration and seeing how one through appropriate stages can [Away from mic] pragmatic aspect.

So I think valuing individual voice, individual aspirations as well as, building community. Thinking about building a community within the setting that you're working with, where so called clients or students and staff or volunteers, everyone is a valued community member. Something to contribute, and that really translates into our artist's ability to engage.

>> We have time for one more question. Can you share a little bit about specific strategies you use to sustain an artist-based environment for young professionals?

>> JILL SCHEIBLER: I would say that for us, least restrictive involves, kind of as a I sort of implied for the transition program. The schedule so that you can set up working with a schedule [Away from mic] free as possible.

So for us, a lot of that means scheduling artists for crowd control, based on
[No audio]