

ARTWorks for Kids

Annual Retreat: Our Voice; Our Vision Telling Our Story

Tuesday, March 4, 2008
Boston Arts Academy

- A. Over 50 ARTWorks for Kids' coalition members participated including staff, board, and student representatives.
- B. Swanee and Charles shared advocacy lessons learned from Denver and abroad, reminding coalition members that what seems impossible is possible!
- C. Participants worked in small groups to create their personal stories and define what makes our coalition powerful. **Sara Stackhouse**, executive producer of the Actors' Shakespeare Project, led this workshop (based on a series by Harvard professor Marshall Ganz) with exceptional passion and purpose. We collected the stories to share with staff and board members.

One student wrote: *"I represent the angel on your shoulder when the bullies said no/And I'll be there till you're older because our limits don't show/I represent the electricity in your light bulb of ideas/I represent whoever you grabbed on to wipe away your tears."*

- D. Janna provided an overview of our advocacy work including current opportunities in Massachusetts and Boston. **Louise Ambler Osborn**, manager of institutional giving at From the Top, noted that learning about the **Commonwealth Readiness Project** was a highlight of the day. She appreciated the Fund finding opportunities that should be on everyone's radar, so arts leaders won't miss a "golden moment."
- E. Consultants from Community Matters ran a session where coalition members identified their advocacy priorities. We recruited new working group members as a result and will convene twice in the next seven weeks to identify next steps for an advocacy campaign.
- F. **Students** from the Boston Arts Academy opened the day with a string ensemble and closed the day with a theater performance. Attendees toured the school at lunch. One student remarked: *"I need music to breathe."* Another said the highlight of his day was learning that: *"This many adults want the exact same thing I want."*
- G. The most critical achievement was inspiring "buy-in" from coalition members that their voice matters and that together, we can provoke change for good.

Advocacy Priorities
Identified by Retreat Participants

Massachusetts

1. Link student skills in arts education to growth of the economy;
2. Increase long term arts funding;
3. Expand arts programming in out-of-school time;
4. Pass and implement the Creative Challenge Index; and
5. Require arts credit in Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.

Boston

1. Ensure access and equity [for all kids to have arts opportunities];
2. Conduct inventory of arts education opportunities currently available;
3. Conduct a public campaign to excite people about the arts; and
4. Provide tax incentives to Boston corporations to support arts education.

Next Steps

1. Convene working group to marry these priorities with the Fund and our community partners;
2. Prioritize among opportunities; and
3. Implement strategies to support the top one to three goal(s).