

Tips for Creating Event Partnerships with Local Businesses and Community Service Providers

Over the years, a number of Art IS Ed event presenters have partnered with local businesses and community organizations such as libraries, cafes, city halls and hospitals to host or sponsor exhibits and presentations. These partnerships have contributed to the outstanding success of many Art IS Ed events through increasing public exposure to student art pieces and performances, giving financial support, providing free event space, and the development of long-term, mutually beneficial relationships. Last year, at the request of a parent, 18 businesses in Bay Street Mall and along San Pablo Ave. exhibited Emery student artwork to over 100,000 customers. In Oakland, through an arrangement with the art organization Opera Piccola, Oakland Technical High School students performed their own writing at Starbucks to a very receptive audience. In San Leandro, through a connection with a high school teacher, Zocolo Cafe displays student artwork in a highly anticipated, annual exhibit. These are just a few examples of the ways you could consider linking up with businesses and organizations in your community to spread the word that the arts are essential to a complete, meaningful education.

What are the benefits?

1. Positive experience for all involved: students gain confidence and receive recognition, businesses and community organizations strengthen ties with their communities, art pieces and performances add to the quality and beauty of life for all.
2. Educates the public about the role arts learning plays in student's lives and builds community value for the arts as part of a complete education.
3. Opportunity for public to see what is going on in their school districts.
4. Partners may provide financial help or access to resources needed for a successful event.

Why would a local business or community organization want to do it?

1. For the kids! This is an opportunity for organizations to express that they actively value the contributions children can make to a community.
2. Increases organization's visibility within the community and creates a positive relationship between the organization/business and community members.
3. Increases customers (student artist's families come in to see the work).
4. Creates a positive, non-commercial way for a business to connect with the community and helps new businesses or young organizations by bringing in new audience.
5. Gives free advertisement and potential media exposure to partnering organizations.
6. Annual events and tradition secure businesses and organizations a place in the community.
7. Brightens the environment where we live and work.

What could a business or community partner do?

1. Provide space for an exhibition or event
2. Promote your event to their customers and employees
3. Provide design or printing of event promotion (flyers, postcards, posters, invitations)
4. Provide volunteers to help with the event
5. Provide financial support for flyer duplication, refreshments, equipment or space rental, or other needs specific to your event
6. Donate an item or service to use as a raffle at your event
7. In-kind support specific to the business or service – such as a drugstore donating photo development of documentation, a copy store providing duplication services
8. Be open to new ideas and unique ways a partner may help with an event

Suggestions for approaching a business or community partner

1. Contact the manager in person. Find out what would be the best time of day or week to get the manager's full attention.
2. Introduce your students by bringing art samples and artist statements with you.
3. Be specific about what type of event you are planning, what kind of artwork, for how long.
4. Be specific about what you are requesting of the event partner: exhibit space, financial support for specific items, or help with an event.
5. Be flexible: don't be put off by an initial "No." Ask what ways they *could* help. Be open to what they can give or ideas they have that might address part of your vision. If a donation request is turned down, follow-up with a request for a discount.
6. Prepare to be surprised at how helpful people can be on behalf your students.
7. Find ways during and after the event to publicly express appreciation for the event partners and for their participation.

Things to Keep in Mind

1. Most exhibits in public spaces do not have insurance to cover loss or damage. Discuss the situation with students so that they are aware of the risk. Consider creating art projects which generate multiple copies (i.e. Printmaking) so that the student can have to take home and the other can be on display.
2. Artist statements increase power of exhibit and help make a more personal connection between the students and the public.
3. Occasionally a member of the public might inquire about buying a student artwork on display. This can be a positive experience for all, if it is mediated by an adult representing the student.
4. Field trips—incorporate a visit to the display into the school day or encourage parents to take their student artists to see the exhibit. This can be an exciting experience for students and can also be a part of the curriculum focusing on "my community/my neighborhood".
5. Involve students in creating a poster to promote the event to the school and/or community.