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Community-Based Education Program



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Promotional Copy

#4148 Evaluating an Elementary School Theatre Program

Organization Information

The Host is a not for profit charitable organization whose mandate is to develop, nurture and sustain the performing arts in Peterborough's historic Market Hall.

Project Information

Linamar for the Performing Arts is a long-term performing arts program of **River Run Centre** for all elementary school children in Guelph from Grades 1 through 8. During this period each child experiences a variety of professional performances in the disciplines of music, dance and theatre. The program follows the overall goals and objectives of the provincial Curriculum for the Arts. River Run Centre prepares, in advance of each performance, an educational package for teachers that is suited to each grade level. The goal is that each child will experience two professional performances at River Run Centre each year from Grade 1 through Grade 8.

The purpose of this project is to provide context and background research which will enable local stakeholders to create a program for every Peterborough and area student in grades 1 to 8 to attend a live performing arts venue at least once a year, every year, at no cost to the students.

The project will seek to understand and tell the story of the Linamar for the Performing Arts program in Guelph, Ontario – a long-term performing arts program for all elementary school children in Guelph from Grades 1 through 8. The project also involves seeking out literature about three-to-five comparable arts programs for grades 1-8 in Canada, United States or the United Kingdom. It is expected that the results of this research will allow Peterborough stakeholders to make better informed choices about planning for similar programming with grade 1-8 classes in the local region.

Students will conduct telephone and/or in-person interviews with programming staff at River Run Centre in Guelph. It is hoped that students will also be able to interview educators and artists – but this will need to be confirmed once the project begins. Student researchers will also be able to sit in on at least one Linmar performance as part of their project. It is also hoped that student researchers will be able to observe a classroom 'de-brief' or 'prep' to see the in-class part of how it works – but this will also have to be determined once the project begins. There is also the possibility for student researchers to review and analyze completed evaluation forms from the Linamar program, but this has not been confirmed. Students will also do a literature review of three-to-five comparable arts programs for grades 1-8 in Canada, United States or the United Kingdom.

Benefit to the Host Organization and the Community

The research results will a) provide the organization with information that will enable staff to design barrier free, long-term arts programming for grades 1-8 students -designed to meet the needs of Peterborough and area educators and students and b) be an important tool in crafting the case for support for stakeholders and ongoing and stable financial support from individuals, funders and corporate sponsors.

This kind of programming will nurture a lifelong appreciation of the arts in our young children, as children will be regularly exposed to a diversity of styles and genres with no barriers to admission.

The benefits of arts attendance for children are well documented, and many research studies indicate increased academic performance, improved social outcomes, increased community spirit and acceptance and understanding of diversity in children who regularly participate in artistic endeavours.

As funding cuts to schools increasingly impede educators' ability to provide access to the arts within the context of a child's overall education, it is increasingly important to ensure that all children have equal access to performing arts, regardless of geographic location, family bias and economic barriers. A model based on the Linamar program will allow every child in our region the opportunity to attend the theatre, every year for eight years.

To be successful, it is important to demonstrate that an investment in this program is an investment in youth, not just the performing arts.

What Students Might Learn

Students will gain practical experience in interviewing and literature review research techniques. Students will also gain knowledge about report-writing, making presentations to multiple audiences, project management and comparative evaluation. Finally, the students will gain an appreciation of the challenges facing the arts in multiple communities...and how the arts contributes (or not) to individual, organizational and community development.

Screening or Training Requirements

Criminal record checks and a vulnerable sector screening will be required for interacting with children (e.g. if permission is granted for observing a 'post-performance' school visit).

Skills or Experience Needed

Skills that would be an asset include: ability to work independently and as part of a team, interviewing and literature review skills, an understanding of how to operate in multi-stakeholder environments.

Resources Required for Project that will be Provided by Host

- Contact information and introduction to Linmar program staff and appropriate program participants.
- Telephone, fax, internet connection as required.*
- Travel expenses as required*
- Paper, printing and photocopying will be provided*
- Projector, screen etc for stakeholder presentation session

**Please note: all expenses must be authorized by the host supervisor before purchasing. It is expected that the student(s) will provide their own computer.*