

Thursday, May 27th, 2004

Virginia da Mota, Director
Office of School Improvement and Support Services
RIDE
255 Westminster Street, Room 600
Providence, RI 02903

To Whom It May Concern:

For over five years the Rhode Island Training School (RITS) has collaborated with AS220 to provide much-needed arts programming for our students. AS220's commitment to the youth at the Training School is both profound and unique, and I am pleased to write a letter in support of their proposal to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program.

Many students at the RITS are visual and hands-on learners, and arts programming has proven to be a highly valuable means of allowing them to express themselves and connect more fully with other academic subject areas. AS220's extensive involvement at the RITS is critical to our capacity to provide these services to our students. They provide a variety of arts workshops after school, incorporate art projects into our regular classroom curriculum, as well as a mentoring program for youth both at the RITS and upon their release. Our relationship with AS220 has grown and deepened over the years as AS220 has demonstrated its ability to successfully engage our students in the arts. We currently fund two full-time VISTA volunteers to incorporate the arts into the classroom and to coordinate AS220's programming at the Training School, and will partially fund a new full-time Family Arts and Literacy Coordinator position.

AS220 has developed a unique strategy for working with our students that—quite simply—works. Through the arts, AS220 instructors have been able to open up worlds of creativity and self-expression for students that have not had success in traditional school settings. Recently, a student who has had great difficulty with writing in all of his classes stood before his peers and teachers at AS220's Performance Showcase and read several poems that he had written. This was a huge breakthrough that would not have been possible without AS220's programming. AS220 effectively engages students both inside and outside the Training School, which means that when our kids get out they are already part of an extensive community and support system. This strategy is unique and highly effective. It is my hope that, with the support of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program, this valuable collaboration with AS220 will continue to strengthen and grow.

Sincerely,

Arlene J. Chorney, Ph.D.
Principal, Rhode Island Training School

528 3590

21st Century Community Learning Centers Program Proposal
AS220 Broad Street Studio – Rhode Island Training School for Youth

Hidden T.R.E.W.T.H. – Students at the RITS produce all of the writing and artwork that goes into this bi-monthly magazine. A review board of RITS students, RITS alumni, RITS administrators and AS220 staff members edit the magazine. 2,000 copies are distributed throughout the school and the rest of the state. (PRESS/Laura)

Muzine – The Muzine guarantees all young people throughout the state the opportunity to publish their words and images. The bi-monthly magazine is compiled, edited, and laid out by a team of Broad Street Studio youth employees and the Broad Street Studio Press Director. 3,000 copies are distributed in schools, community centers and bookstores across the state. (PRESS/Bob)

RITS Showcase – Every eight-week session of classes at the Training School culminates in a showcase in the school auditorium. The room is transformed into an art gallery and there are performances/ presentations by all five workshop groups. (RITS/VISTAS)

Elementary Hip Hop Showcase – Once a month, the youth employees of the Broad Street Studio host an open mic showcase for young rappers, dancers, singers and poets. This event occurs every second Tuesday in AS220's downtown venue. It is accessible to youth from all over the state and provides a safe opportunity for young people to practice their hip hop performance skills. (PERFORMANCE/David)

Metaphorical Palace – Every two months, Broad Street Studio youth employees host a poetry “open mic” for young writers who want to practice taking their poems from the page to the stage. The event always features an accomplished poet and, located at AS220's downtown venue, it is accessible to youth from all over the state. (Did not meet the Stated Objective.)

While BSS youth participated in the Youth Poetry Slam, BSS did not host. Consider increasing participatioin in the Slam to fulfill the objective in the 05-06 year).

Explosion! – The Broad Street Studio has open houses every few months, but once a year, the

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