

SPARKLES

Student Performing Arts Reaching Kids in Local Elementary Schools

After-School Performance Programming in K-8 University Assisted Community Schools on Early Dismissal Days

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URBS-1780: Faculty-Student Collaborative Action Seminar in Urban University-Community Relationships

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We enjoyed working on the PSL throughout this class, and we plan to continue our work in the fall semester to continue fostering meaningful change.

Abstract

In this problem solving learning (PSL) paper, we propose the implementation of a mutually beneficial partnership between Hamilton, Lea, and Comegys and the performing arts community at Penn, called Student Performing Arts Reaching Kids in Local Elementary Schools (SPARKLES). The goal of this partnership is twofold: to bring performing arts exposure to the students of these schools while filling time on early-dismissal Fridays. Early dismissal Fridays are days spaced throughout the semester in which students are released from school around 12:30 p.m. as opposed to around 3:30 p.m on typical school days. This 3-hour difference leads to staffing challenges among after-school programs, as the usual staff often has other commitments prior to the usual 3:30 start time. By implementing performances during this specified time period, performing arts groups would be able to occupy the kids' time and attention for part of this early dismissal time, while providing this vital performing arts resource. Since we have already begun implementing this program during the Spring 2023 academic term by having two performances at Lea and one performance at Hamilton, we discuss the success of the program so far and feedback from involved parties. We hope to continue this program into the Fall 2023 semester and beyond and use this PSL to encourage others to get involved with the Netter Center and courses like this one.

Introduction

As we decided on a PSL topic, we thought about the many discussions we had in class about how strategic problems need solutions that serve the needs of the community in which it is being implemented. Many of the UACS scholars mentioned a consistent need for additional assistance in after-school programs. Nationwide, performing arts programming in schools has been declining, which has had a disproportionate effect on Black/African-American, Hispanic, and low-income students. With Philadelphia schools being chronically underfunded, many schools have to make decisions about which programs to keep and which to cut. Schools are often hesitant to cut programs in “core” subjects like science, math, english and history, in accordance with standardized testing and state curriculum. Instead, these cuts often affect programs related to the performing arts, like music and arts electives and programs.¹

Prior to the pandemic, there was more robust community-based programming in West Philadelphia that helped to combat this lack of resources in schools. Examples of this in the Penn community included groups like the Penn Band and Sparks Dance Company, who would coordinate individual performances and workshops at local schools. However, this tradition fell out of rotation following the COVID-19 pandemic when students attended online.

While students of private schools and other affluent institutions still have access to the arts, many lower-income students attending less affluent schools are put at a perpetual disadvantage. Research has shown that consistent engagement with the arts can provide a creative outlet for students while teaching them how to manage their emotions and have compassion for others. “The arts can also provide an outlet for students to process their emotions

¹ Se'Quia Bailey, “Budget Cuts Threaten Arts Programs, Student Development in Phila. Schools,” Loquitur, August 29, 2014, <https://theloquitur.com/budget-cuts-threaten-arts-programs-student-development-phila-schools/>.

from disaster and trauma as they process their emotions and build resiliency.”² Without this type of programming, students miss these opportunities to explore their emotions and develop these skills.

Located in West Philadelphia, Lea, Hamilton, and Comegys are some of the University of Pennsylvania’s University-Assisted Community Schools (UACS). These schools lack the robust arts programming that would be possible with a partnership with the arts community at Penn. After talking with Suzanna Berger, we thought that a good way to provide some additional assistance in after-school programming as well as combining our groups’ passion for performing arts would be to host performances in elementary schools on early-dismissal Fridays.

Each member of our group has a commitment and passion for the arts. Madison is a visual artist who coordinates the After School Arts Program (ASAP) for local elementary school students at Platt Student Performing Arts House. She admires their talent and hopes to continue to share the performing arts with others. Hannah is a student performer involved in various musical ensembles around campus (Penn Symphony Orchestra, Penn Chamber, various pit orchestras through Platt Student Performing Arts House, community gigs) as a violinist and, above all, wants to experience music with others. Tim is a singer and trumpeter involved in the Penn Glee Club (Alumni Liaison, Student Conductor), The Pennchants (Music Director), the Penn Pipers (Business Manager), and the Penn Glee Club Band; he thoroughly enjoys performing and hopes to help others find performing arts opportunities.

² “Back to School with Arts Education,” National Endowment for the Arts, accessed May 7, 2023, <https://www.arts.gov/back-school-arts-education>.

Roadmap

In this PSL, we will first outline the problem of lack of performing arts resources at Hamilton, Lea, and Comegys. After sharing this contextual information at both the national and local scales, we will discuss why this solution is important and our personal motivations behind it. Then, we will outline SPARKLES and the details of the program at the most immediate, practical level. This description will include all relevant information about people, timing, and logistics. We will describe the case studies that we have participated in at Hamilton and Lea and our plans for improving implementation in the future. We will also discuss the schools we are working with to provide a better understanding of the context in which this PSL has been implemented so far, with specific guidelines and recommendations for performers to help guide and standardize future performances. Finally, we will reflect on the experiences we have had while planning and implementing this program.

Problem Statement

Performing arts in schools have been shown to positively affect the schoolwork and class participation of students. However, there is a lack of performing arts resources in local West Philadelphia elementary schools. This PSL aims to bring artistically-trained Penn student volunteers to schools to expose the elementary school students to the performing arts, while simultaneously filling gaps in after school programs.

Background

National

The lack of performing arts programs is not specific to West Philadelphia, but is rather a part of a larger national trend. To understand the need for performing arts at Hamilton, Lea, and Comegys, it is first essential to establish the national context surrounding trends in performing arts education.

The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPAA) provides insightful details about the problem of arts involvement on the national stage, which can be found in both community and school-based settings. Arts education can be incorporated throughout the curriculum at any age, and arts programs—both private and community-based—can range from beginner-focused to advanced. Arts education in primary and secondary schools is of particular importance, as “millions of parents seek opportunities for their children to study the arts outside of school,” but many lack financial resources or convenient access to these sorts of programs.³ In fact, an analysis of 1992 SPAA data showed that “socioeconomic status is the strongest determinant of obtaining an arts education.”⁴ Although education has the potential to be incorporated into the school curriculum, it has “never enjoyed a secure place in American public education.”⁵

To understand the current state of arts programming in schools, it is important to establish the historical context surrounding arts programming. Since the 20th century, progressive educators like John Dewey have asserted the importance of incorporating the arts to achieve a

³ “National Endowment for the Arts,” accessed May 7, 2023, <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/2008-SPPA-ArtsLearning.pdf>, 40.

⁴ “National Endowment for the Arts,” accessed May 7, 2023, <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/2008-SPPA-ArtsLearning.pdf>, 41.

⁵ “National Endowment for the Arts,” accessed May 7, 2023, <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/2008-SPPA-ArtsLearning.pdf>, 41.

complete education. He asserted that students needed an outlet for culture and personal expression, both of which are provided by the arts. Over the 20th century, art and music teachers became increasingly common in elementary schools, but programs like dance and theater programs remained fairly sparse. A study conducted in 2000 found that while arts classes were offered in some capacity in more than 85% of elementary schools across the United States, dance and theater programs were offered in only approximately 19% of the schools.⁶

Taking a national analytic approach, the SPAA found that childhood rates of arts education have declined significantly from 1982 to 2008. They found that declines were substantial in childhood music, visual arts, and creative writing, while rates of dance and theater increased slightly. While the rate of arts programs increased throughout the 20th century, it has begun its decline in recent decades. Additionally, the study found that arts education is not equally distributed across race and socioeconomic status, with the decline being concentrated among low income children as well as among African American and Hispanic children in particular. According to the School District of Philadelphia, 51% of students identify as Black/African-American and 23% identify as Hispanic/Latino.⁷ While the lack of arts education is a nationwide problem, we aim to improve arts education in Penn's surrounding area by sharing the arts with local elementary schools. In the next section, we will discuss the lack of arts programming as it relates to the School District of Philadelphia and specifically at Hamilton, Lea, and Comegys.

⁶ "National Endowment for the Arts," accessed May 7, 2023, <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/2008-SPPA-ArtsLearning.pdf>, 42.

⁷ "Fast Facts," The School District of Philadelphia, accessed May 7, 2023, <https://www.philasd.org/fast-facts/>.

Specific

When considering the national context, it is important to also apply these findings specifically to the School District of Philadelphia. Across the city of Philadelphia, children have extremely varying access to arts education. Some schools have vast arts resources, but others have nearly none.⁸ Many private schools have access to different kinds of arts education, including dance, theater, instrumental and visual arts. However, there are over 50 schools, including Comegys, that do not even have a part-time music teacher.⁹ Approximately 15 of these schools do not have any access to arts programs at all.¹⁰ When schools do have access to some form of arts education, it is usually not well-rounded. “Almost 100 [schools] have art and music, two have art and theater, six have art, music and dance, one has dance only, an estimated 60 have art only and around 35 have music only.”¹¹ The absence of a well-rounded arts education means that students often miss the benefits of arts education that other students are gaining.

While there is clearly a lack of arts programming in many Philadelphia schools, the question becomes why it is important for students to have access to these resources. First of all, there is a desire for these resources. Every site coordinator that we spoke to expressed immensely positive feelings about having greater arts integration into their schools. Additionally, performing arts education has been shown to increase confidence among children and teens, along with

⁸ Kristen A. Graham, “Some Philly Schools Have Rich Arts Programs, and Others Have None. How Do You Fix It?,” <https://www.inquirer.com> (The Philadelphia Inquirer, October 17, 2017), <https://www.inquirer.com/philly/education/why-do-some-philly-schools-have-rich-arts-programs-and-others-none-at-all-arts-mapping-cultural-education-instrumental-music-orchestra-art-20171017.html>.

⁹ Avi Wolfman-Arent, “Which Philly Schools Don't Have Instrumental Music?,” WHYY (WHYY, May 13, 2017), <https://whyy.org/articles/in-some-philly-schools-you-can-indeed-stop-the-music/>.

¹⁰ Ryanne Persinger Tribune Staff Writer, “Outside Entity Helps Schools without Art Programs,” The Philadelphia Tribune, April 1, 2017, https://www.phillytrib.com/news/outside-entity-helps-schools-without-art-programs/article_b495988d-ebda-5a12-b28b-49d642d3e9e2.html.

¹¹ Ryanne Persinger Tribune Staff Writer, “Outside Entity Helps Schools without Art Programs,” The Philadelphia Tribune, April 1, 2017, https://www.phillytrib.com/news/outside-entity-helps-schools-without-art-programs/article_b495988d-ebda-5a12-b28b-49d642d3e9e2.html.

academic performance.¹² In a meta-analysis of 62 studies, the Arts Education Partnership found that “students who study music have increased achievement and proficiency in math.”¹³ They also found a positive correlation between reading and cognitive development with students who were engaged in the arts.¹⁴ While we acknowledge that our program does not involve long-term arts enrichment, we hope that students exposed to this program will reap at least some of these positive benefits.

Arts education can also have some positive behavioral benefits. A separate meta-analysis conducted by the Arts Education Partnership found that drama courses were able to help students develop an understanding of social relationships and complex social issues. On the other hand, students in dance had greater self-confidence, social tolerance and capacity for positive self-expression.¹⁵ These effects were amplified among students of lower socioeconomic status, showing that arts education is most essential for those who are economically disadvantaged.¹⁶ While most of these studies were conducted over longer periods of time, there is little research surrounding the effects of short-term arts exposure. However, much research does note that the exposure to arts education can spark interest in the arts, leading to longer-term participation in which students can reap the full benefits. In the next section, we will further explore some of the benefits of arts exposure on elementary school students and how we plan to implement this exposure.

¹² <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/1681/eaj01.pdf>, 105

¹³ “Arts Programming,” USA today (Gannett Satellite Information Network), accessed May 7, 2023, <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/education/2002-05-20-arts.htm>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Why and How

Much of the literature surrounding this topic shows positive correlations between arts learning and intellectual development in children.¹⁷ Music education was especially associated with increased intellectual development.¹⁸ While we acknowledge that our program is not meant to sustain longer-term involvement in the arts, “engaging in an activity can facilitate one’s intrinsic desire to learn, and this is associated with long-term overall well-being from continued engagement”.¹⁹ By exposing kids to these arts activities and helping them to interact with them in some way, we will nevertheless provide a positive influence and perhaps pique the interest of a student that otherwise would not know about or have exposure to a specific art form.

Looking at specific art forms, the research for arts exposure becomes even more compelling. Studies have shown that listening to live classical music has the potential to evoke positive feelings in children and has a direct impact on their listening and concentration skills.²⁰ A study conducted by music charity Apollo Music Projects examined the effect of chamber orchestra workshops on 574 children between the ages of eight and ten. The study found that “82 percent of children said they felt positive feelings during the live performance.”²¹ Two of the performances we have conducted have included performances by Penn Symphony Orchestra. We observed an effect on the children that was consistent with the results of the aforementioned

¹⁷ “The Power of Music: Its Impact on the Intellectual, Social and Personal ...,” accessed May 7, 2023, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0255761410370658>.

¹⁸ “The Impact of Music on Childhood and Adolescent Achievement,” accessed May 7, 2023, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1540-6237.2009.00598.x>.

¹⁹ “Does Participation in Music and Performing Arts ... - Sage Journals,” accessed May 7, 2023, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0002831217701830>.

²⁰ Sian Hamer and Sian Moore, “Study Finds Live Classical Music Has Huge Emotional Benefits for Children,” Classic FM (Classic FM, February 17, 2021), <https://www.classicfm.com/music-news/children-emotional-impact-live-classical-music-study/>.

²¹ Sian Hamer and Sian Moore, “Study Finds Live Classical Music Has Huge Emotional Benefits for Children,” Classic FM (Classic FM, February 17, 2021), <https://www.classicfm.com/music-news/children-emotional-impact-live-classical-music-study/>.

study in that the kids were extremely engaged throughout the performance and seemed to relax. This led to a seemingly positive experience for both the students and the PSO members.

Not only does the research reflect positive effects, the people involved with and affected by this PSL thought that it would be a positive program. The site coordinators we spoke with noted that the students love to engage with the arts, but there is not always an opportunity to do so in the ways that they would like. Penn student performing arts groups span a wide range of disciplines and cultures, making them ideal for exposing students to a large variety of arts. These different types of arts groups might be able to expose kids to arts that they would otherwise not be exposed to, piquing their interest and creating an outlet for them. For example, Arttia Watts, site coordinator at Lea, mentioned that there is a large proportion of South-Asian students at the school, and that it would be great to have culturally-relevant performances for them and to expose students to these types of arts. Penn has many South-Asian cultural arts groups, and some, like Penn Atma (a South-Asian all-female a cappella group) have done performances at schools in the past.

Many performing arts groups from Penn have previously performed at local West Philadelphia schools, but much of this participation has stagnated after the pandemic. Below are some of the groups that we spoke with regarding their participation with school performances in the past. We aim to get these groups and more involved in creating programming like this on early dismissal days.

- Front Row Theatre Co
 - 2017-2018: Sent members as Teaching Artists to lead theater programming in after-school arts program at Sayre High School. This partnership was facilitated by Jon McKay (Netter Center, [LetsHealPhilly](#)).

- 2017-2018: Invited Sayre students to on-campus acting workshops
- CityStep
 - Recurring and regular in-classroom teaching, on-campus dance workshops
 - 2013-2014: Partner schools included Samuel Powel, Samuel Huey, B.B. Comegys, KIPP West, Chester Arthur, and Andrew Jackson
- Disney A Cappella
 - 2017-2018: Performed at J.W. Hallahan Catholic Girls High School in Center City
 - 2016-2017: Sang for a music class at Blossom Philadelphia (formerly United Cerebral Palsy of Philadelphia)
 - 2014-2015: Performed at KIPP Charter Schools
- Stimulus Children's Theatre
 - Have performed in schools including Comegys in the past; dates unknown.
- Penn Atma
 - Prior to 2017-2018: Mini performances at West Philadelphia schools such as the HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy
- Penn Band
 - 2017-2018: Led instrumental music "day clinics" at Olney High School in December 2017 and Frankford High School in April 2018.
- Sparks Dance Co
 - Prior to 2016-2017: Performed at KIPP Charter Schools
- Penn Glee Club
 - Prior to 2017-2018: Performed at West Philadelphia schools

As for our personal motivations for completing this project, all of us have been involved in the vibrant arts community at Penn and have had really positive interactions with younger peers at these schools. Hannah volunteers at Lea for K-ELA in the mornings and is a part of the classical ensembles at Penn in a capacity of both intense enjoyment of performance and in leadership. Madison is involved in coordinating the After School Arts Program (ASAP) through Platt house and enjoys interacting with students from different local elementary and middle schools. Tim is a singer and instrumentalist in several performing arts groups at Penn and sits on the Board of three groups: the Penn Glee Club, Pennchants, and Penn Pipers. Coming from these similar backgrounds, we were all immediately drawn to Suzana's initial proposal for this PSL and worked with it as a jumping off point. From there, we analyzed specific programs and tried to learn from their successes and mistakes. In the next section, we will give a brief overview of such programs.

Similar Programs

One way we hoped to refine some of the details of our PSL was to examine similar programs and try to learn from them. The University of South Florida (USF) College of the Arts piloted a similar outreach program “to bring interactive music, theater and dance performances in Hillsborough County Public Schools.”²² Their program differed from ours in a few substantial ways. Firstly, the University of South Florida has a more robust arts program, so they were able to pilot this program through the school of arts as opposed to outsourcing to independent groups like we are in our program. However, it did spark the idea for us to try to get this program more integrated into the University of Pennsylvania. One way in which we have tried to do this is by reaching out to faculty who have expressed interest in this or similar programs. For example, we reached out to Dr. Molly McGlone about her “Music and Social Change” course to try to see if there would be a way to either integrate SPARKLES into that class or gauge interest from past students in the class, but we have yet to receive a response. We will continue to reach out to her and other faculty to see if there are other avenues for integrating this program more formally with the university to add an extra layer of structural support and accountability. Additionally, USF’s program used a combination of both bringing elementary school students on campus via buses and having the performers go to the elementary schools. While the scope of our program is more focused on bringing performing arts groups to elementary schools to fill time in after school programs, we think it would be an interesting idea to eventually bring the elementary school students into Penn for a showcase or performance. A spokesperson of the USF program claimed that “having student performers in a university setting makes the experience more

²² University of South Florida, “USF College of the Arts Inspires Local K-12 Students through New Outreach Program,” USF News, accessed May 7, 2023, <https://www.usf.edu/news/2023/usf-college-of-the-arts-inspires-local-k-12-students-through-new-outreach-program.aspx>.

tangible.”²³ For future planning, we hope that we will be able to coordinate buses to bring elementary students into Penn to see a performing arts showcase. One takeaway from USF’s program was that they applied for stipends from the Dean’s office to help alleviate/eliminate the costs of the program (to fund student transportation or buses from the elementary school students). We could not find any kind of stipends for programs like this at Penn, but it seems most promising to reach out to both the Dean's office as well as the Graduate School of Education to see if they have any funding opportunities to subsidize buses for elementary school students to Penn. We have only recently reached out to these offices to inquire about opportunities, but we hope to hear back from them soon.

We looked into two other arts programs run through the University of California Los Angeles and the University of California Irvine.²⁴ These programs were run fairly similarly to the outline of SPARKLES, but it was run through the school itself. The difference between these schools and Penn, however, is that they are much larger and have more structured educational arts programs in all disciplines. While Penn’s formal arts education is less robust than these schools, it has inspired us to reach out to theater arts and music programs at Penn. Due to the timing of this discovery, we decided that it was too close to the end of the year to do any formal outreach. However, in the fall we are planning on reaching out to the visual arts, theater arts, and music departments and ask them if they would be able to organize some kind of performance or if they would share our performing arts sign up form to see if any pre-existing groups would be interested in visiting one of the elementary schools on early-dismissal Fridays.

²³ University of South Florida, “USF College of the Arts Inspires Local K-12 Students through New Outreach Program,” USF News, accessed May 7, 2023, <https://www.usf.edu/news/2023/usf-college-of-the-arts-inspires-local-k-12-students-through-new-outreach-program.aspx>.

²⁴ “Outreach: UCI Claire Trevor School of the Arts,” Outreach | UCI Claire Trevor School of the Arts, accessed May 7, 2023, <https://www.arts.uci.edu/outreach>.

Looking at other similar programs in different parts of the country was extremely useful in terms of logistical planning and gaining new ideas for the expansion of the programs. Our research could not find any other programs that were doing exactly the same thing as we have outlined, but it was nevertheless helpful in tweaking some of our initial plans. In the next section we will outline our general solution and detail some of the entities that will be imperative to carrying out our plan.

Solution (General Statement)

Now that we have established the context for why this type of programming is essential for students, we will outline our proposed solution. We propose an implementation of performance programming by Penn performing arts groups on early dismissal Fridays. This will serve the dual purpose of exposing elementary school students to different performing arts while simultaneously filling time during after school programs when the schools are understaffed.

Agents

Agent	Role and Timeline	Status
Arttia Watts (Site Coordinator at Lea)	Week of March 20th: Arttia meets with Madison and Talia (PSO Member) to discuss logistics of the March 31st performance. Arttia works with Madison and Talia to find space and equipment needs, as well as agreeing to serve as a point of contact at the school on the day of the performance. During SPARKLES: Arttia will serve as a point of contact at Lea Elementary for any on-site question/issues that the Penn student groups might have	Confirmed: We have met with Arttia and she agreed to be a point of contact for current and future performances at Lea. She also said that she is available via email to approve performances as we develop a schedule for the fall semester.

	Ongoing: Arttia will approve performances on early-dismissal days.	
Jazz Williams (Site Coordinator at Hamilton Elementary School)	Week of April 14: Jazz helps facilitate the performance on April 14th by helping the students with managing elementary school students and other equipment needs. During SPARKLES: Jazz will serve as a point of contact at Hamilton for any on-site question/issues that the Penn student groups might have Ongoing: Jazz will approve performances on early-dismissal days.	Confirmed: Jazz has agreed to be a point of contact for current and future performances at Hamilton. Jazz is also available via email to approve performances as we develop a schedule for the fall semester.
Aziz Collins (Site Coordinator at Comegys)	Week of April 21st: Aziz meets with Madison and Hannah to discuss logistics of fall performances. During SPARKLES: Aziz will serve as a point of contact at Comegys for any	Confirmed: Aziz has agreed to be a point of contact for current and future performances at Comegys. Aziz is also available via email to approve performances as we develop a schedule for the fall semester.

	on-site question/issues that the Penn student groups might have Ongoing: Aziz will approve performances on early-dismissal days.	
PSO Leadership: Elliot Kim, Hannah Lee, Talia Coopersmith	Week of March 24th: PSO Leadership coordinates with Hannah and Madison expectations and logistics for the March 31st event and develops a schedule and format for interactive performance. Week of April 7th: PSO Leadership coordinates expectations and logistics for the April 14th event, and fine-tunes the previously developed schedule and format for interactive performance. Ongoing: PSO's Outreach Committee is developing ways to continue engagement with schools and implement a method of ensuring future	

	leadership will continue engagement efforts.	
Ryan Sathianathen (Penn Band Coordinator)	Week of April 7th: Madison and Ryan coordinate via email with Arttia to have the Penn Band perform at Lea on April 14th.	Confirmed: The performance was successful and Ryan expressed interest in participating in the fall.
Penn Glee Club Leadership: Tim Dietrich, Laura Jannetta (Business Manager), Sekia Phillips (Service Chair)	Week of April 7th: Tim coordinates via text with Laura and Sekia to have the Glee Club perform at Hamilton on April 14th.	Confirmed: The performance was successful and Penn Glee Club leadership expressed interest in continuing their participation in the fall.
Other performing arts group contacts	Ongoing: Performing arts group contacts will agree to performances on an as-needed basis	TBD: We have not yet reached out to all of the group leaders but plan to do so in the fall.

Catalysts

Catalyst	Role and Timeline	Status
Hannah Lee	Week of March 31: Hannah was responsible for coordinating with the orchestra to make sure that the performance went smoothly at Lea, including communicating any last-minute changes quickly.	Confirmed: Hannah was able to facilitate smooth performances that both the Lea/Hamilton students and PSO enjoyed! She has also agreed to be a liaison between SPARKLES and the PSO to coordinate further

	Week of April 14: Hannah was responsible for communicating with the orchestra to make sure the performance at Hamilton went smoothly. Ongoing: Hannah will help coordinate performances between Hamilton, Lea, and Comegys and the PSO. She will also help facilitate performances with other groups when applicable and help carry out any other plans.	performances in the fall.
Tim Dietrich	Week of April 14: Tim was responsible for coordinating with the Glee Club about their performance at Hamilton and communicating any logistical changes. Ongoing: Tim will help coordinate performances between Hamilton, Lea, and Comegys and the Penn Glee Club. He will also help facilitate performances with	Confirmed: Tim was able to help plan a great performance with the Glee Club at Hamilton. He has also agreed to help facilitate future performances with the Penn Glee Club and other performing arts groups in the fall.

	other groups when applicable and help carry out any other plans.	
Madison Smith	Week of April 14: Madison was responsible for coordinating with the Penn Band about their performance at Hamilton. Ongoing: Madison will serve as the communication between SPARKLES and any group within the Performing Arts Council.	Confirmed: The performance with the Penn Band at Hamilton went well! Madison has agreed to serve as the liaison between the SPARKLES program and groups within the performing arts council.
Suzana Berger	Week of March 31: Suzana was helpful in serving as a line of communication between Arttia and Hannah. She was able to communicate last-minute changes and help propose alternatives. Week of April 14: This implementation went much more smoothly, and Suzana was instrumental in setting up this performance and its execution.	Confirmed: Suzana was essential in setting up the performances on the weeks of March 31 and April 14. She has agreed to help facilitate communication (as needed) for the future of the program.

	Ongoing: Suzana will be looped into all communications and can help facilitate the relationships between performing arts groups and the site coordinators.	
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Participants

Participants	Role and Timeline	Status
Lea Students	Week of March 31: Attended their after school program and interacted with members of the Penn Student Orchestra. They participated in activities such as watching a performance led by the PSO as well as participating in a “petting zoo” activity following the performance. Week of April 14: Attended their after school program and interacted with members of the Penn Band. They participated in activities such as watching a performance led by the band as well as	Successful: The students seemed to enjoy both performances.

	participating in a “petting zoo” activity following the performance.	
Hamilton Students	Week of April 14: Attended their after school program and interacted with members of the Glee Club and the Penn Student Orchestra. They participated in activities such as watching the performances led by the PSO and Glee Club. They also participated in activities like “guessing the song” and a “petting zoo” in which they could interact with members of the PSO and their instruments.	Successful: The students seemed to engage with both performances and expressed positive feedback.
Comegys Students	TBD: We hope to coordinate similar performances with the Comegys students in the fall.	Pending
PSO Members	Week of March 31: Traveled to Lea to perform for the students. Led a 20 minute performance followed by a “petting zoo” activity. Week of April 14: Traveled to Hamilton to perform for the students with the Glee Club. Led a 20 minute	Successful: The PSO members really enjoyed interacting with the students at both schools and expressed interest in returning in the fall.

	performance followed by a “petting zoo” activity.	
Glee Club Members	Week of April 14: Traveled to Hamilton Elementary School to perform for the students with the PSO. Led a short performance with interactive components.	Successful: The Glee Club members really enjoyed interacting with the students at both schools and expressed interest in returning in the fall.
Penn Band Members	Week of April 14: Week of April 14: Traveled to Lea Elementary School to perform for the students. Led a 20 minute performance followed by a “petting zoo” activity.	Successful: The members of the band really enjoyed interacting with the students at both schools and expressed interest in returning in the fall.

Implementation

While our PSL has already been implemented, we have worked to streamline communication between school coordinators and student performing groups to make continued implementation as easy as possible.

Logistics

To implement our PSL initially, we spoke with Suzanna and learned that there was an immediate desire to fill time on these early dismissal days. As Hannah is directly involved with PSO, we met with the board in mid-march to see if it would be feasible to implement a performance at the end of March, as well as one in April. The PSO Outreach Chair, Elliot Kim, agreed to help organize a trip to Lea on March 31st. We contacted both Suzana and Arttia to ensure that both parties were aware of the performance and interested. Once we received confirmation, we initially planned to have some PSO members visit Lea at 3:30 p.m. However, we learned from Suzana on March 29th that the after school program on March 31st was only going to run until 3:00 p.m. due to unforeseen logistical challenges. Instead, we contacted PSO to change the time for a performance to begin at 1:00 p.m. and last about an hour. Following this performance, we learned that it is easier to have the site coordinator and Suzana copied on the same email.

For coordinating the April 14th performance at Hamilton, we copied Suzanna and Jazz Williams on the same email and worked out a plan that way. As PSO had already performed at Lea, they felt comfortable going to Hamilton to conduct a similar performance. Since Tim is a member of the Penn Glee Club, he asked Suzanna if they would be interested in having Glee

come to sing on the same day as PSO. Tim worked with other Penn Glee Club leadership to organize fourteen members to perform at Hamilton before nine members of PSO performed.

While Madison was conducting other outreach to performing arts groups, the Penn Band expressed interest in performing on April 14th as well. Rather than having a third group at Hamilton, Madison coordinated with Ryan Sathianathen and Arttia Watts to help organize a performance at Lea for this early dismissal day. Below, we will outline specific details of each of the case studies of our PSL implementation.

Case: March 31st



Pictured: Gavin Lee demonstrating the viola to three students

On Friday, March 31st, 2023, we implemented the first iteration of this PSL at Lea. Six members of the Penn Symphony Orchestra (PSO), including PSO Social Committee Member Hannah Lee (violinist), PSO Outreach Chair Elliot Kim (violinist), PSO Vice President Talia Coopersmith (violinist), Kevin Xu (violinist), Henry Sywulak-Herr (violist), and Deborah Zhang

(cellist), were in attendance as performers, arriving at the school around 12:30 p.m. *Lea Music Staff Member* Kyle Almeida helped performers set up the stage and provided student-sized instruments for performers to use in demonstrations and interactions. *UACS Arts, Culture, and Humanities Partnerships Director* Suzana Berger was in observation and to help with set up and logistics. *Lea Site Coordinator* Arttia Watts brought in students and signed them starting around that time through 12:50 p.m., then took time to organize their seating by grade and set expectations for behavior and listening during the large group portion of the event.

At 1:00 pm, Elliot Kim introduced himself and the event, establishing the performers were part of the Penn Symphony Orchestra. He engaged students by asking them questions, including “What is an orchestra?” and “Guess the instruments”. He later stated in a debriefing interview that his main objective was to connect with students and that it was important for him to show them he was listening by letting their responses lead the direction of the questions and incorporating their responses into his explanations²⁵. Performers began individual introductions, stating their name and instrument. They then stated their favorite aspect of their instrument (ex. “I like how low the cello can go”). Then the performers individually performed short excerpts from a mixture of popular and classical pieces and engaged students through a musical guessing game. To close the full group performance section, Arttia Watts and Elliot Kim established norms and expectations for interactions with the instrument, stressing three main points: the instruments are very valuable, they are very fragile, and the performers love them very much. Part of this involved educating about instrument details, such as the fact that they are made of wood and can be easily broken, i.e. by being dropped on the ground. Finally, it was emphasized that students should always “Ask if you can touch the instrument”.

²⁵ Elliot Kim Debriefing Interview. April 3rd, 2023.

Around 1:20 p.m., Arttia Watts split students into four large groups. Each group rotated through different activity stations, one of the stations being interacting with performers in the auditorium. Each rotation lasted around 15 minutes with a 5 minute buffer for transitions between stations.

Performers sat spread apart on the stage. As each group came in, Elliot Kim split students into groups of 2-4 and sent them to a different performer. These rounds lasted around or over 5 minutes, allowing each small group of students to visit three to four performers. During transitions, performers improvised using “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star”.

Each performer focused on a different method of engagement (unprompted and uncoordinated). For example, Henry Sywulak-Herr included explanations of instrument anatomy and what to be careful of when playing on the instruments (ex. Not touching the bow hair)²⁶, while Talia Coopersmith demonstrated different styles of playing (ex. fiddle)²⁷ and Kevin Xu played students’ song requests²⁸.

Having student-sized instruments on sites was one of the greatest benefits and allowed students to actually experience playing instruments (ex. Deborah Zhang’s cello, as a full-size, would have been impossible for students to play). This particular group of performers were also observed to be incredibly flexible and engaging in their methods of interacting with students, ability to adjust to different students’ grades/abilities/personalities, and attentiveness to student needs for communication²⁹. Debriefing interviews were conducted within three days of the event’s completion with each performer, and these interviews will establish the basis for

²⁶ Henry Sywulak-Herr Debriefing Interview. April 1st, 2023.

²⁷ Talia Coopersmith Debriefing Interview. March 31st, 2023.

²⁸ Kevin Xu Debriefing Interview. April 1st, 2023.

²⁹ Suzana Berger. March 31st, 2023.

developing a “Guidelines and Expectations” sheet to be shared with future (string) instrumental performers.

Regrets include not performing as a large ensemble, which was due to lack of lead time to rehearse prior to the event. Other improvements for the future include streamlining student group transitions and extent of speaking, rather than performing/interactive engagement in the first portion of the event.

Case: April 14th

On Friday, April 14th, 2023, we implemented the second iteration of this PSL at two sites simultaneously: one joint interactive performance between the Penn Glee Club and Penn Symphony Orchestra (PSO) at Hamilton and an interactive performance led by the Penn Band at Lea.



Pictured: Penn Glee Club members performing at Hamilton

At Hamilton, fourteen members of the Penn Glee Club were in attendance, including Director Daniel Carsello and singers Tim Dietrich (bass II), Christina Cappolla (alto II), Laura

Jannetta (soprano II), Savannah Sparks (alto II), Ella Sohn (alto I), Molly Bradley (alto II), Andrew Beatty (tenor I), Donna Jalsosjos (alto I), Ryan Oliver (tenor II), Kyne Wang (bass II), Zade Dohman (tenor II), Harrison Beckler (bass I), and Ethan Spellmeyer (bass II). Nine members of the Penn Symphony Orchestra were also in attendance, including PSO Social Committee Member Hannah Lee (violinist), PSO Outreach Chair Elliot Kim (violinist), Zoe Patterson (violinist), Wendi So (violinist), Gavin Lee (violist), Henry Sywulak-Herr (violist), Sierra Wei (cellist), Alyssia Liu (flutist), and Triloshan Thillaikumaran (trumpeter). From PSO, three performers (Hannah Lee, Elliot Kim, and Henry Sywulak-Herr) had previously participated in the March 2023 iteration. Performers began arriving, setting up, and warming up at the school around 1:10 p.m. *UACS Arts, Culture, and Humanities Partnerships Director* Suzana Berger was in observation and to help with set up and logistics. While *Hamilton Site Coordinator Jazz* Williams was not able to attend, *Hamilton Music Staff Member* Guy W. Cannon was able to help coordinate performer set up and warm-up spaces.

At 1:20 p.m., Suzana Berger introduced the groups performing and the event, establishing that the first performances would be by the Penn Glee Club. She asked students to take this performance as an opportunity to relax, encouraging them to put away phones but giving them the option to show traditional attentiveness or close their eyes and enjoy the music. At 1:25 p.m., Penn Glee Club began their performance. The set list was as follows: “Here Comes the Sun”, “Let the River Run”, “Sh Boom”, “Go the Distance” (from Disney’s *Hercules*), and “The Red and Blue” (Penn’s Fight Song). After opening with “Here Comes the Sun”, there was a description of what Penn Glee Club is, then a performance of “Let the River Run”. After the song (around 1:31 p.m.), there was a discussion and demonstration of four part harmony using the song “Sh Boom”. First, the melody was introduced as well as the vocal line it is sung by

(“The melody is in the tenors”), along with a description of what a melody is (“The melody is what you will be humming as you leave”). Then, there was a run through of the melody featuring only the tenor voices. Next, the bass part was introduced (“Next, we will add the bass, which is the low part”) and there was another brief run through, this time with the tenor and basses. There was another run through, this time introducing harmony with the alto part, and finally an introduction of the soprano harmony (“This is the part that floats on top”) and a full run through of the song with all of the parts. Following this (around 1:37 p.m.), the last two songs were sung, and students were invited to follow along with the arm motions for Penn’s Fight Song.



Pictured: Penn Glee Club members dancing to “The Red and Blue”

Students were generally very engaged and respectful, clapping after each song and either focused on the performance or meditating with the music. If there were any moments where any student was distracted or talking in between performances, staff on site were able to keep it under control; however, students generally remained quite quiet and attentive especially during the singing of the songs themselves.

Following a short intermission to set up, Penn Symphony Orchestra members took to the stage. Like previously, Elliot Kim introduced himself and the event, establishing the performers

were part of the Penn Symphony Orchestra. He engaged students by asking them questions, including “What is an orchestra?” and “Guess the instruments”. Performers played a popular song (“Let it Go”, from Disney’s *Frozen*) together, as a large ensemble. They then began individual introductions, stating their name and instrument. They then stated their favorite aspect of their instrument (ex. “I like how low the cello can go”), and individually performed short excerpts from a mixture of popular and classical pieces to introduce individual sounds and tones and engaged students through a musical guessing game. In addition, performers once again played a popular song (“Under the Sea”, from Disney’s *The Little Mermaid*) together as a large ensemble. To close the full group performance section, Elliot Kim established norms and expectations for interactions with the instrument, stressing three main points: the instruments are very valuable, they are very fragile, and the performers love them very much. Part of this involved educating about instrument details, such as the fact that they are made of wood and can be easily broken, i.e. by being dropped on the ground. Finally, it was emphasized that students should always “Ask if you can touch the instrument”.



Pictured: Hamilton student playing the cello



Pictured: Alyssia Liu demonstrating the flute

Like before, an interactive instrument petting zoo took place. Because there were fewer students than at the March 2023 interactive performance, rotations took place without dividing students further, with three to four students rotating amongst the nine players. The woodwind and brass instruments (Alyssia Liu on flute and Triloshan Thillaikumaran on trumpet) allowed students to press buttons and valves while instrumentalists blew into the instrument to ensure hygienic practice, and strings operated as previously.



Pictured: Hamilton students excitedly watching the performance

Recommendations

One of Suzana Berger's recommendations was to pair performances of Penn Glee Club's style with instrumental groups³⁰. This was to ensure balance and diversity in the styles of engagement possible – Penn Glee Club's performance allowed students to relax and set the mood for the program, while instrumentalists allowed for students to interact with performers and instruments in a more direct way.

³⁰ Suzana Berger. April 14th, 2023.

Programming Information

The following include general information about the sites and resources available at each of them, as well as detailed guidelines for performers (instrumentalists and vocalists). This part of the document is a living section open to feedback and continued editing as we continue to work with sites and performers and connect with staff and performers about creating the most efficient and subjectively fulfilling experience for everyone involved.

Henry C. Lea School

Henry C. Lea School is a Pre-K-8 elementary school. It has an auditorium in the lower level hallway (Kindergarten classrooms) that they also use during after school programs. They had a number of chairs, music stands, and student-accessible instruments for use, as well as a *Music Staff Member* (Kyle Almeida) who was available as on-site staff on March 31st, 2023.

There were some technical difficulties with getting lights on stage, but the nature of the performances was simple enough for performers to not feel hindered by this aspect.

Having a music instructor also meant that using student-accessible instruments and setting up/breaking down for the performances was a simplified process. We were able to use either wing of the stage to store instruments and cases, and had time to warm up prior to the performance in the space as well.

Andrew Hamilton School

Andrew Hamilton School is a K-8 elementary school in the School District of Philadelphia. It has a renovated joint cafeteria/auditorium space that they also use for their after school programs. They had a number of chairs, music stands, and A/V technology (ex.

Microphone and speaker) for use, as well as a *Music Staff Instructor* (Guy W. Cannon) who was available as on-site staff on April 14th, 2023. They do not have musical instruments available for students to demo on, but based on our experience there in April of 2023, this is not a hindrance to the interactive nature of music programming.

Having a music instructor also meant that there was a music room space (situated directly next to the auditorium) that allowed for performers to store instruments and cases, warm up for the performances, and coordinate logistics and guidelines prior to performing.

Benjamin B. Comegys School

Benjamin B. Comegys School is a K-8 elementary school in the School District of Philadelphia. It has an auditorium and music program. While we have yet to engage with this site directly, we have spoken with *Comegys Site Coordinator* Aziz Collins³¹ and are planning for similar interactive performances to take place starting Fall 2023.

Instrumentalists

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- Adjust expectations regarding skill level/sounds produced/how much you can teach them in the time given
- Be very clear about your boundaries and the fragility of your instrument – students will be careful when they see you are serious about this
- They're kids! Be patient and give clear instructions that they can understand.

These age kids are default pretty engaged, BUT try to adjust to their responses

³¹ Aziz Collins. April 21st, 2023.

Ex. Learning about different strings and specifics – ask them if they want to learn about that, some kids just want to play around with the instrument

Many will want to try playing your instrument – again, it is okay to be firm with boundaries.

Ex. “You have to ask before you grab it”

- If you are letting them play your instrument, the students not actively involved may become distracted (don’t stress about it)

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Engage from the beginning:

Set expectations in the beginning, when you have the most attention from them

Ex. “This is my instrument that I can show you, and if you want to play, you can play on this one that is your size”, “You can take turns trying it later but I’m going to have my hand on the instrument the entire time”

- *Passive but not accommodating* – don’t push anyone but keep firm on the boundaries you are comfortable with

If kids come up asking to hold the instrument, start by establishing conversation with them

Ex. Ask name, “Do you remember what instrument this is”, “Do you know what the difference is between x instrument and x instrument”, introduce details about the instrument, plucking strings, then playing starting with open strings

- Learning about the sound and how to change the sounds using small technique changes

Content:

Have an idea of how much you want/should teach them

Ex. Playing open strings, maybe a finger or two down

Try to not over-correct (be firm but flexible)

- Look for cues – a lot of kids wanted to try really hard and do really good; encourage those who want to do more to do more

Use your hands: don't have a hands off approach

Ex. Hand over hand to draw the bow

Have ideas of what to say regarding parts of the instrument so they understand easily

Ex. Instead of frog, just guide their hand there and call it the black box

Ex. Saying to play in the “open space”

Dealing with group dynamics/engaging groups of students:

Defer to teachers when needed

- Referring to them as each others' “friends”
- Keeping the role to mediator – understanding time is limited and we don't see these kids on a daily basis, etc.
- Firm but passive especially regarding dynamics, encouraging friendship

Engaging all of the students in a group at once – with two-three students per group it was not too difficult but if there are larger groups this may pose a challenge

- Breaking down the concept of the violin more and doing interactive activities that allow for multiple students to engage at the same time
- Ex. holding out violin to allow multiple students to pluck strings, playing music for them, showing them sheet music and discussing

Dealing with shy kids – you don't have to hold it if you don't want but try touching it, or plucking it, etc.

WHAT WORKS:

If you have extra time during a rotation:

- Asking for song requests
- Other interactive elements – what is the lowest note, highest note, etc.
- Different specific techniques or “themes” (ex. “Legato v. Staccato v. Pizzicato”)
- Demonstrating different styles or genres

Strings:

- Explaining the bow hair
 - Simple and clear – don’t touch it because then the hair cannot play on the instrument
- Showing them how to hold the instrument and holding the bow

Ex. Violin: “Hold out your left hand” – hold up right hand while telling them to hold up left hand all the way to hold violin (mirror image)
- Playing with a bow can be a challenge, starting with plucking!
- Let them hold the bow however was comfortable
- Guide to play open strings
 - “Hair on the highway”
- Adjust force for playing
- “Lowest note”, “highest note”, “finger down”, etc.

Vocalists

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- Adjust expectations regarding musical background and language to use (these students are younger and it is important to bear this in mind when teaching them as opposed to college students)

- They're kids! Be patient and give clear instructions that they can understand.
- Kids of this age can stay pretty engaged, BUT be mindful of performance lengths, complex language, type of music, etc.
 - Be sure to keep the songs upbeat to hold the students' attention, involve games or other interactive singing activities, ask questions, and keep performances to a reasonable length
- Based on experiences gained from implementing this PSL so far, it is far easier to engage students with instruments rather than singing since they have not been exposed as much to instruments. However, this does not mean that they can't have fun learning about choirs and singing, it just means you need to prepare more in terms of programming and interactive activities.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Engage from the beginning:

Set expectations in the beginning, when you have the most attention from them

Ex. "We are X group and we are here to sing a few songs for you and teach you about choral singing"

Be prepared to stay afterwards to meet the students and ask them what their names are, favorite music, and other related questions.

Have a designated speaker(s) with experience working with children. This person should be good at keeping them entertained and engaged, and be prepared to modify language and plans based on reactions from the students and performers.

Content:

Have an idea of how much you want/should teach them

Ex. How singing physiologically works, what music terms mean such as melody, harmony etc., what the different voice parts are. All of these could be a fun Q&A activity.

Dealing with group dynamics/engaging groups of students:

Defer to teachers when needed

- Referring to them as each others' "friends"
- Keeping the role to mediator – understanding time is limited and we don't see these kids on a daily basis, etc.

Engaging all of the students in a group at once – with two-three students per group it was not too difficult but if there are larger groups this may pose a challenge

- Breaking down the concept of the violin more and doing interactive activities that allow for multiple students to engage at the same time

Ex. holding out violin to allow multiple students to pluck strings, playing music for them, showing them sheet music and discussing

Dealing with shyer kids – you don't have to hold it if you don't want but try touching it, or plucking it, etc.

WHAT WORKS:

If you have extra time during the performance:

- Include games like guess-the-tune activities on a random syllable like "doo" (Mary Had a Little Lamb, Hot Cross Buns, or a well-known pop song)
- Have voice parts sing individually ("this is what the bass voice part sounds like" etc)
- Teach the students a simple song in unison or a 2-part harmony ("this group of students is going to sing this note, and this group is going to sing this note")

Other Performing Groups

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- Adjust expectations regarding arts background and language to use (these students are younger and it is important to bear this in mind when teaching them as opposed to college students)
- They're kids! Be patient and give clear instructions that they can understand.
- Kids of this age can stay pretty engaged, BUT be mindful of performance lengths, complex language, type of music, etc.
 - Be sure to keep the songs upbeat to hold the students' attention, involve games or other interactive activities, ask questions, and keep performances to a reasonable length
- While we have not implemented performances with theater or dance, we imagine that teaching the kids a short dance or having them play improv games would be most effective!

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Engage from the beginning:

Set expectations in the beginning, when you have the most attention from them

Ex. "We are X group and we are here to perform for you and teach you about dance/theater"

Be prepared to stay afterwards to meet the students and ask them what their names are, favorite music, plays, and other related questions.

Have a designated speaker(s) with experience working with children. This person should be good at keeping them entertained and engaged and can modify the course of action if necessary!

Content:

Have an idea of how much you want/should teach them

Ex. How many of them have danced/done theater before? What styles do they like? Be mindful of what they might be interested in/want to learn!

Dealing with group dynamics/engaging groups of students:

Defer to teachers when needed

- Referring to them as each others' "friends"
- Keeping the role to mediator – understanding time is limited and we don't see these kids on a daily basis, etc.

Engaging all of the students in a group at once – with two-three students per group it was not too difficult but if there are larger groups this may pose a challenge

- With dance and theater, we imagine that having them be active in some way would be the best way to keep them engaged. For dance, it might look like teaching them a dance (could even be to a trending TikTok song) or for theater, maybe a quick improv exercise!

WHAT WORKS:

If you have extra time during the performance:

- Include games like having the children copy dance moves or even doing 1-on-1 improv games with each other
- Could have dance groups talk about their style of dance and show some easy moves

Sustainability

In an effort to increase the sustainability of our program, we propose that the Netter Center hire a designated work-study student who can serve as a connection between the schools and the performing arts groups. We have created a [google form](#) to send out to all Penn performing arts groups to gauge their interest in participating in this program. Madison has sent this form out to the 47 groups in the Performing Arts Council (PAC), which includes musical, theater and dance groups at Penn. She will also promote it in the slideshow at the monthly PAC general board meeting (GBM) at the first meeting of the fall semester. We will also send the form out to independent student performing arts groups to try to reach as many student groups as possible. We found that it is better to reach out to groups closer to the performance dates—once they already have their schedules lined up—so we decided to wait until the fall semester to start reaching out to groups again. The work-study student would have access to this form and could contact the groups who said that they would be interested in performing and connect them with schools who demonstrate similar interest. The work-study student, which Dr. Harkavy and Professor Simmonds approved, would be in charge of coordinating the performing arts groups with time slots on early dismissal days to help find the appropriate times, as well as helping with the logistics of each school. Additionally, this student could schedule time to attend staff meetings that occur every other week between Suzana Berger and the various site directors and confirm performances as they are scheduled.

While we hope that we will get enough groups to respond via the google form, we will also provide a [list of contacts](#) through which the work-study student could reach out to individual groups about specific performances. We will compile a list of contacts, or a “council” that the work study student can contact to ensure that this program continues to run in the case that

individual groups are unresponsive to the initial outreach via google form. Every member of this PSL is involved in the performing arts community in a different way and has contacts throughout much of the community at the University of Pennsylvania. We will make it a priority to try to instill these guidelines for continuing this project within our groups/respective communities so we can ensure that the program continues to run smoothly even after our departure from Penn.

Penn Student Engagement

However, in implementing the first iterations of this PSL we have found that the most effective way of organizing students has been through our personal connections and relationships with groups and individual performers. This is why the development of a student committee is something that is essential to the effectiveness of the work-study position. Ideally, the committee would be composed of Penn students who are passionate and motivated to further this goal of bringing interactive performances to younger students in the area. This way, they can utilize their greater personal networks to generate optimal student engagement and commitment to performances. Establishing such a network provides the work-study student with the greatest breadth and depth of commitment possible from the Penn side of performing logistics.

Long-Term Planning

Essential to community partnerships is mutual benefit. While iterations of our PSL have proven to already achieve this goal, we believe this ideology can be furthered in a physical sense as well. With enough time to plan ahead, we are pursuing the idea of field trips for students—potentially once a semester—to come and watch performances from a variety of student groups at one of Penn’s performance venues (ex. Irvine Auditorium, Iron Gate Theater, Platt Student Performing Arts House). These performances could showcase cultural diversity, diversity in types of interaction, and diversity in genre. Another idea for mutual benefit would be connecting both Penn students and elementary school students and their families to arts exposure opportunities in the heart of Philadelphia and the surrounding area. This includes the Kimmel Cultural Campus Philadelphia Orchestra Family Concerts, Spring Fest presented by Wolf Performing Arts, and partnering and collaborating with other community arts organizations with the common goal of increasing accessibility to the arts and specifically performing arts.

An avenue of brainstorming we have for this program beyond the extracurricular aspect would be implementing this PSL as an ABCS component and thus giving it academic draw and value as well. We hope to connect with Professor Molly McGlone in the near future to gain further insight on how to incorporate this PSL into ABCS and academics as she currently heads an ABCS course in the music department (MUSC0180/URBS0180: Music in Urban Spaces), which incorporates volunteering in music and drama programs in neighborhood public schools³².

To do this requires further engagement with academic departments that can support such endeavors, such as the Music and Theatre Arts departments. Thus, we also plan to connect with the *Director of Performance and Admissions Liaison* Dr. Michael Ketner, *Chair of Graduate*

³² “ABCS 2022-2023,” Netter Center for Community Partnerships, March 24, 2023, <https://www.nettercenter.upenn.edu/what-we-do/abcs-courses/course-history/abcs-2022-2023>.

Studies in the Music Department Professor Glenda Goodman, *Chair of Undergraduate Studies* in the Music Department Professor Anna Weesner, *Associate Director of Theatre Arts* Noah Levine, *Theatre Technical and Production Coordinator* Cat Johnson, and *Program Director* in the Theatre Arts Department Dr. Rosemary Malague.

Reflection

This process was nothing like we had expected it to be. We began the PSL process with warning's from Om about how the process might be slow at times and to stay patient and not give up. However, the opposite quickly became true for our group. Soon after Hannah and Madison met with the Penn Student Orchestra, Suzana asked us if the PSO would like to perform on two early dismissal days later in the semester. Before we had even done the research, we began implementing our PSL. When Tim joined our group, he asked if they would also like the Glee Club to perform. Soon after, we got the Penn Band to sign off on a performance. Before we knew it, we had helped coordinate three performances. Despite being hectic at times, I think that we can all honestly say that it has been a great experience. All of the factors aligned for us at the right place and the right time to make it a great experience for the elementary students and the Penn performers.

We had a few major takeaways from this process. First, we learned that the Netter Center Staff is the most useful resource that we could have. Their knowledge, experience and willingness to help was integral in carrying out both the ideation and implementation of our PSL. Secondly, we learned to expect the unexpected. With so many moving parts, there is likely something that is going to go wrong. We learned that even if there are small bumps throughout the process, if both parties have a good time then we can consider it successful. Finally, we learned that it is better to reach out to performing arts groups fairly shortly prior to the performance. We want to ensure that they have enough time to prepare, but we also want to make sure that they do not forget. Thus, we are waiting until closer to the fall semester to try to garner more interests from performing arts groups. We sincerely hope that we will be able to continue to

implement this project in the fall! Thank you again for all of your help and guidance throughout this process.

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Appendix

Interview Summaries

Deborah Zhang:

- Preparation side

- Has a lot of free time at the moment so didn't mind the short turnaround with schedule, maybe at least a week's notice in general though
- Getting the "Guess the song" music last minute was/could be a little stressful
- Would have been nice to play something together - rehearsal time
- Impressed with organization despite it being the first time, sign in and knowing where to go was quite easy

- General

- Activities were nice and interesting – enjoyed the first interactions Elliot had with the students (asking questions, engaging students)
- For Guess the Song pieces – less classical more pop, more "guessable"
- Having instruments on site that are the kids' size was really nice for them to try playing
 - Possibly seeing if there are various sizes of the instruments
 - **What are expectations for students to "teach" the kids? Guidelines a little gray**
 - Short on time – too many students for the time/too little time for the students

- This could be eased by multiple instruments or multiple players of each instrument
 - Having music teacher there to enforce care around instruments was nice
- Keeping the time table – ending when we say we will end
- Subjective experience:
 - Exciting to see how excited the students were to play
 - Trying to figure out teaching multiple students and how far to go with them
 - Lack of time to engage with students especially those who were quite interested
 - Less students more time
- **General guidelines:**
 - They're kids! Be patient and give clear instructions that they can understand
 - Ex. spreading legs to play cello
 - Does come naturally given your understanding/experience with the instrument
 - Adjust expectations regarding skill level/sounds produced/how much you can teach them in the time given
 - Have an idea of how much you want/should teach them
 - Playing open strings, maybe a finger or two down
 - Guiding hands – don't have a hands off approach, ex. Hand over hand to draw the bow

- Have ideas of what to say regarding parts of the instrument and bow so they understand easily (don't use the "specific names", ex. Frog, fingerboard)
 - Instead of frog, just guide their hand there and call it the black box
 - Saying to play in the "open space"
- **What didn't really work**
 - Kind of dependent on the kid and their level of engagement:
 - Learning about different strings and specifics – ask them if they want to learn about that, some kids just want to play around with the instrument
 - When students are playing, they are very attentive – sometimes distracted if they are not the ones interacting with the instrument
 - Would recommend to other Penn students – don't normally work with children so it was an eye opening experience, funny listening to what students will say, reflecting on learning on the cello and personal experience of first learning, feels good to volunteer

Talia Coopersmith:

- **Preparation side**
 - Personal bias – elementary school outreach is not as difficult/high stress
 - Ideally with engagement – better idea of school schedule and better solid engagement with orchestra players (editing the forms)
 - Rehearsal day to run through and establish norms with players
- **Improvements for actual interactive performances**
 - Tighter grasp on students and conversation

- Possibly more productive to do more performance and listening and less of the call and response happening at the same time (difficult transitions)
 - Introducing genres
 - Some of the guessing games may not be the most appropriate for the classical pieces
- More time introducing the symphony – adding more context to who we are
 - Playing together?
- Establishing better norms – don't touch until your musician tells you it's okay
 - Horse hair and hand grease, not touching the hair
- Physically farther apart – spaced out to encourage engagement between groups and students
- **General guidelines/expectations:**
 - Violin on the shoulder, hair on the highway, adjusting force for playing
 - Asking “how much do you know already?” especially if they express prior experience of exposure
 - Playing with a bow can be a challenge, starting with plucking!
 - “Lowest note”, “highest note”, “finger down”, etc.
 - Engaging all of the students in a group at once – with two-three students per group it was not too difficult but if there are larger groups this may pose a challenge
 - Breaking down the concept of the violin more and doing interactive activities that allow for multiple students to engage at the same time

- Ex. holding out violin to allow multiple students to pluck strings, playing music for them, showing them sheet music and discussing
- Training on maintaining boundaries – especially with touching instruments
 - Joking around while maintaining the boundaries, ex. If kids play with the hair of a bow, “Not your nasty finger grease”
 - Kids are able to understand you are joking so long as you are exaggerating enough
 - You can make fun of a problem without singling out kids
- Sometimes the faster rounds were easier – letting them float around to Deborah and back, for example, was good for engagement
- **Subjective experience**
 - Prior experience with kids meant that lots of expected events occurred
 - Promoting “endangered” instruments – their uniqueness, “If you’re a violist everyone will want to be your friend”
 - Reducing the feeling of inaccessibility of classical music
 - Very exciting and fun! Low stakes high reward situation – you really can’t have “arguments” with the kids in this amount of time and the authority are the “adults and teachers”

Henry Sywulak-Herr

- **Preparation side**
 - Was pretty flexible personally with having open Fridays, knew about the flexibility needed with elementary schools

- Elliot was great with communication
- Maybe communicating a larger time chunk? Not as an expectation but as a possibility of reality
- Rehearsal day would be nice
- **General/Improvements**
 - Exposure to classical music – how would they have reacted to us playing a classical piece as a group? More exposure to what we do as classical musicians
 - Would require a rehearsal
 - For guessing game – definitely stick to pop songs
 - Separating those a little better – classical as entertainment and pop songs for more engagement
 - Crowd control, especially when asking for questions or doing guessing games
 - Discouraging shouted out answers and encouraging hand raising
 - Playing a tune may or may not work for attention – needs to be made very clear that the tune signals attention and designating to a specific person or scenario so that it is very clear
 - Longer rounds, 2-3 students with our timing was not bad but any more and it was difficult to ensure each student got a turn and felt “satisfied”
 - Fun activities to do in the case we don’t have instruments for them to try
 - For different stations/rounds – different specific techniques or “themes”?
 - “Legato v. Staccato v. Pizzicato”
 - No difficulty with directing them to not immediately grab the instrument – having a smaller instrument on hand that is “their size” helped

- Arttia and Elliot's explanation to establish the importance of being careful with the instruments was a very good norm set
 - "If you drop your instrument on the ground will it break" "Yes it will!"
- If kids came up asking to hold the instrument, redirecting to establish conversation/dialogue
 - Asking names, do you have questions about the instrument, here are some facts and information
 - Ask name, "Do you remember what instrument this is", "Do you know what the difference is between violins and violas" – introduce string names and difference in open strings ("C string like the cello!"), plucking strings, then playing starting with open strings (and specifically experiencing the C string)
 - Learning about the sound and how to change the sounds using small technique changes
 - "How do you play high notes"
- Having kid-size instruments was so nice
 - To even have a couple, or if there are more violins combining groups so we have longer rounds
- Dealing with shy kids – you don't have to hold it if you don't want but try touching it, or plucking it, etc.
- What is the point where you don't try to "meddle" with kids' dynamics
 - Referring to them as each others' "friends"

- Keeping the role to mediator – understanding time is limited and we don't see these kids on a daily basis, etc.
- Firm but passive especially regarding dynamics, encouraging friendship
- Expectations clear from the beginning, when you have the most attention from them
 - “This is my viola that I can show you, and if you want to play, you can play on this one that is your size”
 - Passive but not accommodating – redirecting attention when things are trailing off into directions that are not effective or what we want
- The schedule and components of the event worked really well – having freedom in ambiguity for the experience to be so individual
- Different styles – demonstrating different playing styles? Ex. Talia and fiddle
 - This can ease the redundancy if we have more of one instrument than another
- Asking for song requests if there are periods of “lull” after petting zoo time
 - Could also work with instruments where passing around is difficult (ex. Ww and brass)
 - Other interactive elements – what is the lowest note, highest note, etc.
- Using the different pitched tubes – demonstrating the range of instruments using the tubes, showing them the pitch differences with size differences
- **Explaining the bow hair**
 - Simple and clear – don't touch it because then the hair cannot play on the violin

- Showing them a bow hold – not clenching, not making a fist, etc.
 - Not over-correcting (grip too high or too low, being firm but flexible)
 - Looking for cues – a lot of kids wanted to try really hard and do really good; encouraging those who want to do more to do more
- **Subjective experience**
 - Definitely enjoyed, definitely want other Penn kids to experience it
 - Having this experience of showing these kids the love and experiences we have with music was so wonderful
 - Watching kids “light up” – a girl who plays violin playing viola and being able to see them feel inspired

Kevin Xu

- **Preparation side**
 - Was fine with how it went, overall good experience would be down to do it again
 - Figuring out music and something to play together – rehearsing together beforehand
 - We were engaging enough with the kids
- **Interactive aspect**
 - Showing them how to hold the violin and holding the bow
 - “Hold out your left hand” – hold up right hand while telling them to hold up left hand all the way to hold violin
 - Not bow hold but holding the bow however was comfortable
 - Guiding for open strings

- Most expressed they wanted to try playing
 - “You have to ask before you grab it”
- Asking for song requests
- Time was okay – we could have stayed longer
 - The spiel worked well, timing of thing went well overall
- Generally no problems with group dynamics
 - Some kids comparing their skill to others, but deference to teachers
- Our tasks were relatively straightforward, so there weren’t things that “didn’t work”
 - Attention spans aren’t that long with young kids regardless so rotations worked well
- **Subjective experience**
 - Really enjoyed, would do it again, recommend to others
 - Would be nice to have more people but 5-6 was enough for us to handle the rounds at Lea with the three large groups and small groups of 2-3
 - Striving for instrument diversity
 - Grouping violins together
 - Kids’ excitement to hold and play around on the instruments was enough to engage even if there were lots of violins

Elliot Kim

- **Preparation**

- Starting sooner – planning schedule, recruiting, last minute on top of last minute kind of stressfulness (unpredictability from both sides)
- Recruiting from the PSO end – wanting more engagement
- Last minute-ness did not affect the content of the event much! Still went pretty smoothly
- Planning with safety net – wider engagement and interest
 - Starting the week or two before to recruit
- Large group rehearsal – Disney themed
- **Actual schedule debrief:**

1:00 p.m. start

We're Penn Symphony Orchestra

“What is an orchestra?”

- Gauging student responses, incorporating their answers
- Guessing instrument
- Player intros and “What is your favorite thing about your instrument”
- Guessing game
- Another short large ensemble thing

Norms and expectations

- Stressing that the instruments are very valuable and fragile (wood, easily broken)
- We love them
- Action item – “Ask if you can touch the instrument”

Split into groups 1:20-25

Each round – attempted to do 5 minutes but always did more

- Initially three large groups, 15 minutes each
 - Should have been less than 5 minutes each

Maybe:

- Half and half of a group with long times and rotations within violins and then the other instruments