CREATIVE LEARNING IN PITTSBURGH

Prepared for The Heinz Endowments

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Introduction

In this report, we summarize a 7-month effort to better understand the current conditions of Pittsburgh's creative learning ecosystem. By a learning ecosystem, we mean the organizations, individuals, and places that create, participate in, and fuel creative learning experiences. In order to gain a picture of the current ecosystem, we held focus groups with leaders in the creative learning community, distributed two regional surveys (one for educators and one for organizational leaders), and conducted multiple interviews with The Heinz Endowments program officers. We describe the distribution of creative learning opportunities, perceptions of the tensions around equity within this learning ecosystem, and what those in the community perceive as strengths and areas for improvement. Our aim is to both describe the rich complexity of the creative learning ecosystem in Pittsburgh and to help identify those elements of the system that are thriving and those that may be lacking.

Our eight focus groups had 38 participants total, all of whom were selected based on their leadership in the creative learning sector and prior existing relationship with The Heinz Endowments. Approximately half of the focus groups were composed of representatives from small arts organizations, many of which placed Black or African art forms as a central focus, and a few focus groups were composed primarily of larger and older regional arts organizations, which all focus on Western European art. We conducted interviews with four program officers from The Heinz Endowments and collected written materials from both our philanthropic partner and organizational websites.

We distributed **surveys of organizational leaders** to 160 creative learning organizations in the region, and these were also promoted publicly by five regional out-of-school intermediaries. Representatives from **53 creative learning organizations** completed this survey. We promoted educator surveys in similar ways and also asked regional creative learning organizations that work with teaching artists and other creative learning educators to share the survey with their networks. We got responses from **83 creative learning educators (or teaching artists)**.

Throughout our data collection and analysis, we worked to attend to biases that define creative learning in Eurocentric or White supremacist ways, including what is considered "good" or "traditional" art, as well as attending to our biases as a research team, our partner's giving history and biases, and the existing structures within the creative learning community that have largely supported older and established arts organizations that engage in European-derived arts (e.g., ballet, symphony) over newer, typically smaller Black-centered arts organizations.

Creative learning is a process and approach to learning that includes art disciplines and practices, and may also include other approaches and emerging areas of learning, including experiential, tactile, project-based, maker, technology-enhanced, and more. Creative learning helps to spark new ideas and perspectives in children and youth and their communities.

Cover photo: Scott Goldsmith

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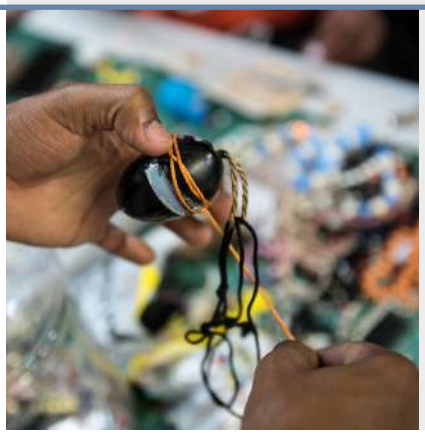

Photo: Scott Goldsmith

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A summary of what we learned about the Pittsburgh creative learning ecosystem

Pittsburgh is made up of a complex set of creative learning programs—many more than one might think. Our data-collection efforts yielded over 250 named creative learning organizations and programs. We believe this includes all the larger and more well-known programs, but it may only be a fraction of the total creative learning programs in the city.

For programs and organizations, we learned that:

- A key consideration is the distinction between art exposure versus advanced art experiences. A healthy ecosystem needs both.
- Organizations and programs can be usefully categorized as having one of three types of creative learning foci: core, included, or supporting.
- Black-centered art programs make up a sizeable and nameable group in Pittsburgh.
- Creative learning happens in all kinds of settings and ways. Specifically, from our survey samples:
    - 59% of creative learning organizations deliver in schools; 75% of educators do
    - 94% deliver in out-of-school settings
    - 46% of organizations offer no-cost programming

For Pittsburgh, we found evidence both of a single overall creative learning network and of meaningful subnetworks. Smaller networks exist within the city (e.g., some people tend to know or collaborate with particular others), but network membership is not neatly determined by the variables we tested: size of organization, core-ness of creative learning, or degree of focus on Black-centered arts. However, we did find that one subnetwork contains more black-centered, small, and creative learning core organizations than would be expected by chance. These analyses suggest that the ecosystem is well positioned for network initiatives that aim to harness cross-program resources, sharing, and strategic collaboration, elements that were also supported in focus group conversations.

For creative learning educators, we learned that:

- The term "teaching artists" is used by 89% of the educators and 58% of the program leaders that we surveyed. Most teaching artists identify with both artistry and teaching. Unlike many educators, the vast majority practice their art—they *do* as well as *teach* in their topic area.
- Both educators and program leaders expressed the need for better access to professional benefits for educators, primarily health care. A majority of educators are self-employed and many work hourly. Hourly employment is *more common* at larger institutions.
- In open-ended survey responses, 24% of teaching artists described ways to address creative learning in schools (12% of program leaders mentioned this). This likely reflects that 74% of the teaching artists we surveyed regularly work in schools.

Regarding equity, we learned that equity and access are salient for the vast majority of the community—it was the number one topic mentioned in open-ended responses across both surveys, and a major discussion topic in focus groups. Equity means different things to different people; our thematic coding revealed three key categories: race, resources, and reach. Research participants identified numerous ways to prioritize equity at interpersonal and institutional levels, and they stressed a need for cross-organizational efforts to address more structural inequities.

Regarding needed improvements, participants in this study identified several areas to target improvement efforts in the Pittsburgh creative learning ecosystem:

- Access and opportunity
- Rigorous, authentic art experiences for young people
- Creative learning advocacy, both in schools and with families
- Support for networking and collaboration
- Teaching artist profession-building
- Professional learning that is creative-learning specific

Part 1:

What does the creative learning ecosystem look like?

Photo: YMCA Lighthouse

The idea of a learning ecosystem provides a useful way to think about the complex community of organizations, educators, and children and youth engaged in creative learning. Biological ecosystems are made up of a range of elements that come together to create function and structure. They can be healthy—or not—depending on the ways that these parts come together. Extending this metaphor to learning, the creative learning ecosystem in Pittsburgh includes a range of elements, including the organizations, individuals, and places that create, participate in, and fuel creative learning experiences for children and youth. Because learning happens across time and various settings, the idea of a learning ecosystem can be a useful tool for representing the complexity of the learning landscape and considering how different components of the landscape work together.

Photo: Scott Goldsmith, Mobile Sculpture Workshop

In this section we consider the creative learning ecosystem at three levels. What does creative learning look like...

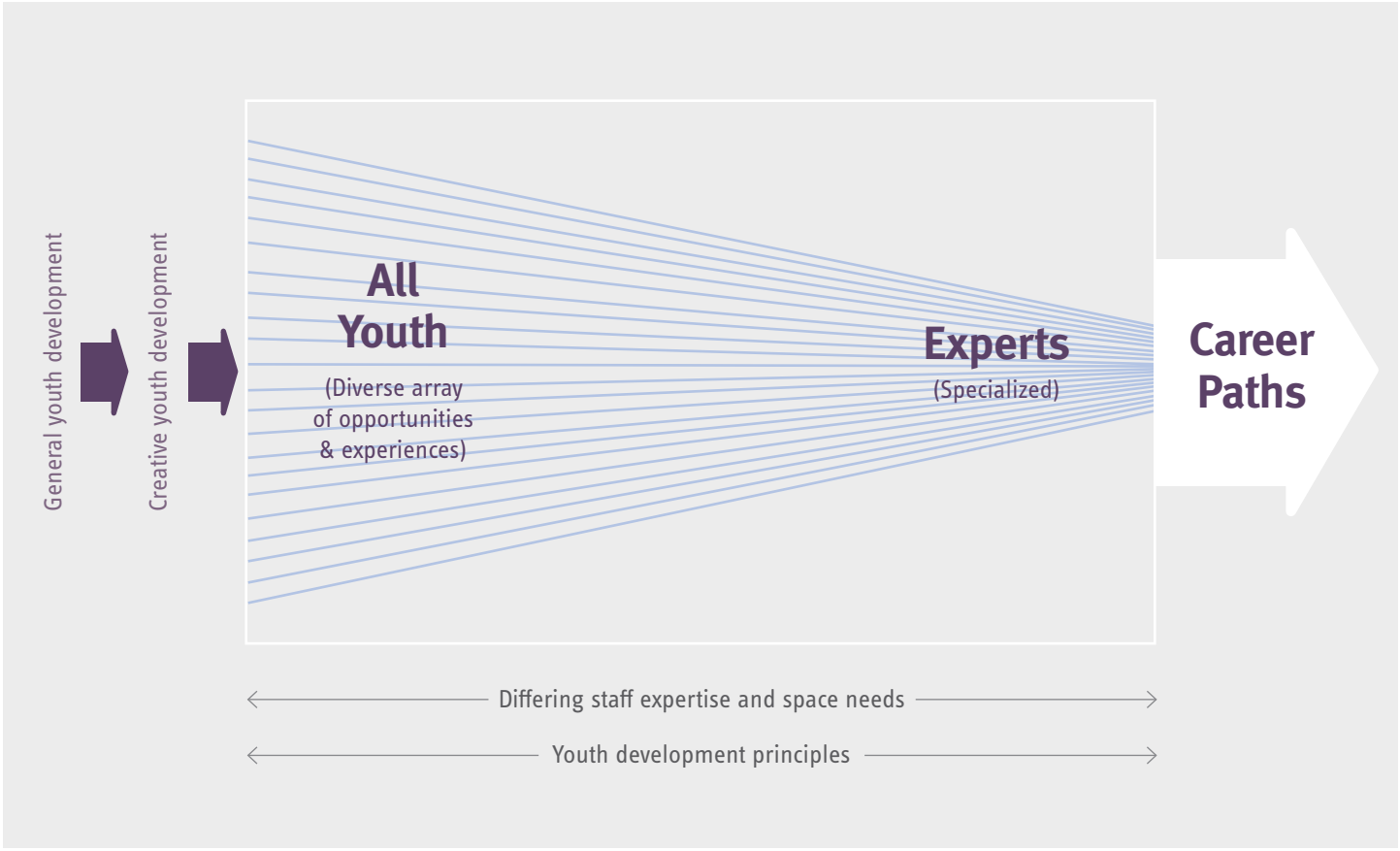
1 for programs or organizations

2 for Pittsburgh

3 and for educators.

Photo: Mac Howison

One thing we heard over and over again in focus groups was the tension between **arts exposure** or sharing arts with children in an introductory way (e.g., having children who have never heard orchestral music go on a field trip to hear an orchestra concert) and deep, **long-term engagement** and art skills-development in authentic and rigorous art or craft. Colleagues at the Forum for Youth Investment (forumfyi.org), created the figure below to address this differentiation (simplified for this report). This image reflects the idea that a healthy creative learning ecosystem would have both: diverse, arts exposure opportunities for all youth and rigorous expertise development for a smaller, interested group. The figure suggests that creative youth development (left side of figure) is a subset of general youth development and that youth development principles (bottom of figure) apply throughout all creative learning settings. It also notes that different modes of creative learning have different needs for space and for staff expertise; for example, teaching high-level dance requires staff expertise in high-level dance.

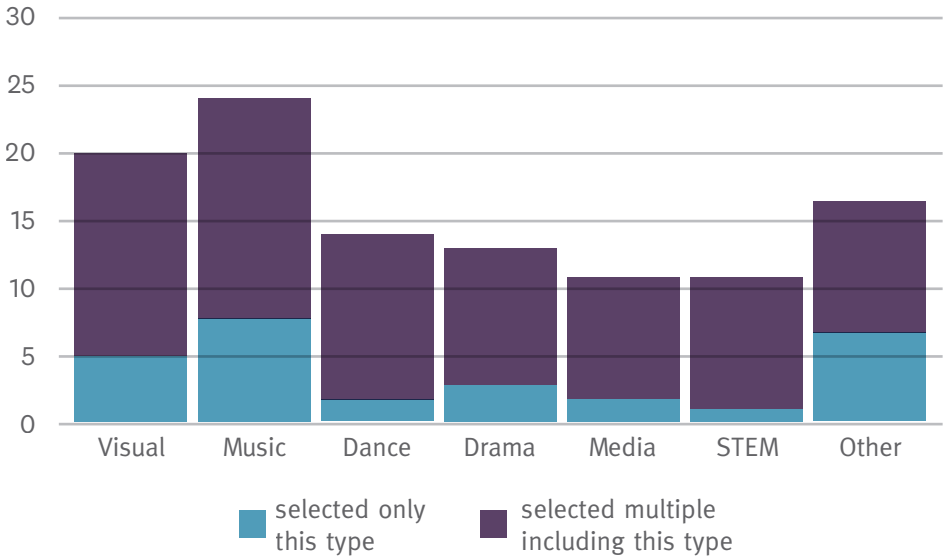


What does the creative learning ecosystem look like for programs and organizations?

Photo: Scott Goldsmith

Representatives from 53 organizations completed the organizational survey, which is the dataset where we can look at the type of art or craft offered. The bar chart below shows the creative learning areas represented—both those that selected only a particular area (e.g., only visual arts) and those that selected multiple areas (e.g., visual arts and STEM). Areas were relatively evenly represented with slightly more music and visual than other forms. More about where these sites provide programming appears in the figure at right.

Pittsburgh Creative Learning Organizations



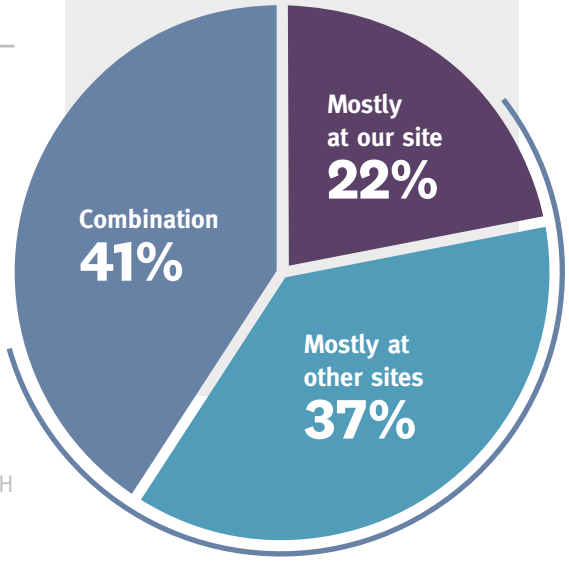
Where Creative Learning organizations serve

59% regularly deliver in **schools** (more common from *large* organizations).

94% regularly deliver in **out-of-school settings.**

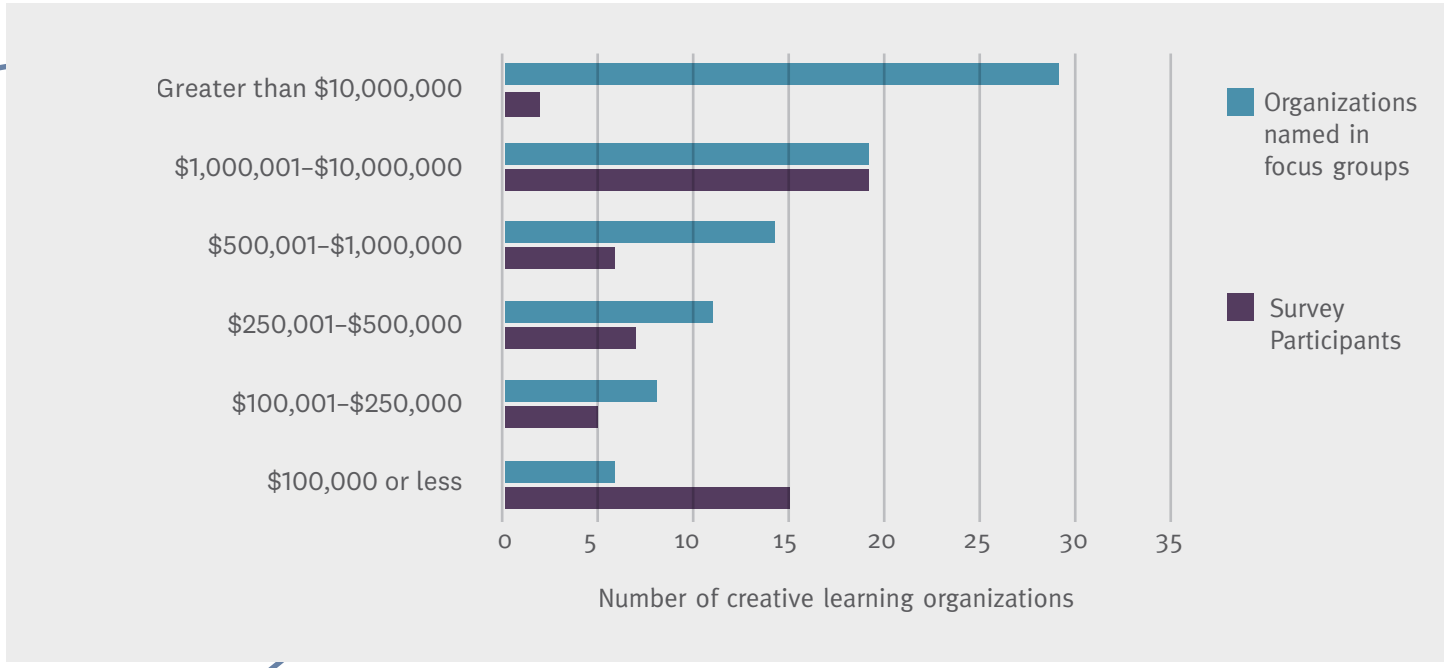
58% work in Heinz Endowments target neighborhoods.

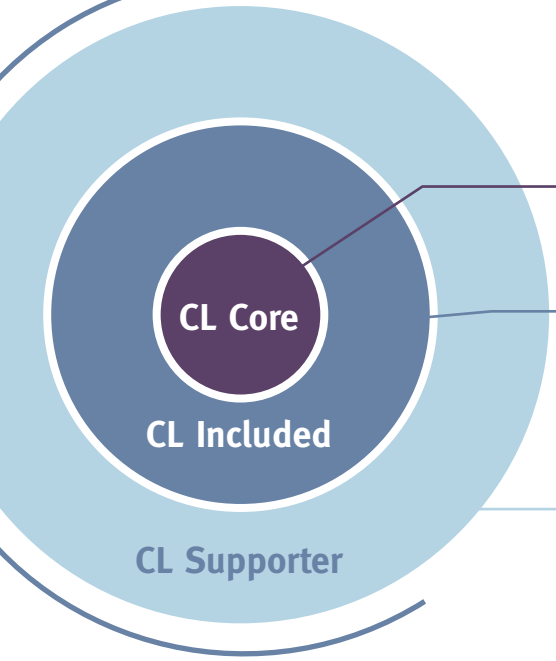
46% offer no-cost programming; another 22% cost < $25/week.



Organizational size. The bar chart below shows the size distribution[1] of those named in the focus group activity (blue) and the 54 sites that completed organizational surveys. Organizations with budgets of $1 million or greater make up 39% of the survey group and 55% of the organizations identified in focus groups.

Size of organization predicts a few things. Larger organizations have a **significantly higher ratio of hourly workers** (vs other types) and deliver **more programming in schools** than smaller organizations (78% of large organizations vs 41% of smaller organizations).[2]





Creative learning orientation.

After much discussion and several iterations, we developed the three-level model depicted here. This model provides relatively distinct ways to categorize organizations by how central creative learning is to their mission and whether they provide direct programming to children and/or youth. The model uses the following definitions:

CL Core organizations provide direct programming, with creative learning in their core mission. Includes large cultural organizations, small community-based organizations, conservatories, and innovation-based organizations.

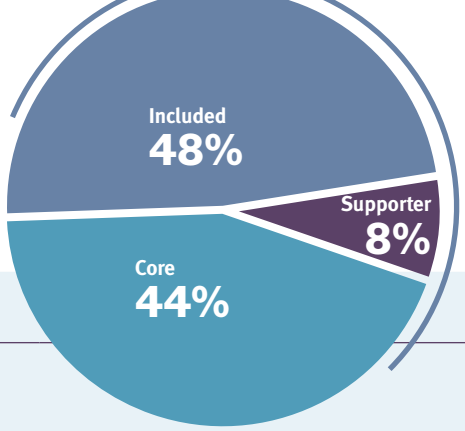
CL Included organizations provide direct programming, and some of it may be creative learning, but creative learning is not their core mission. This includes two types: creative arts organizations that do a little bit of learning (e.g., The Andy Warhol Museum) and learning organizations that do a little bit of creative arts (e.g., Sarah Heinz House).

CL Supporter organizations do not provide direct programming but influence, support, and affect creative learning. Includes intermediaries (e.g., Arts Education Collaborative), funders, corporate sponsors, universities, and government.

1 We determined size by each organization's annual expenses as reported in its 2017 990, retrieved from GuideStar. For organizations that did not have a publicly available 990, we coded their size based on self-reporting to The Heinz Endowments (n=9) or relationship with a larger parent organization, e.g., the Carnegie Institute (n=13). There were three (n=3) organizations that we were unable to classify.

2 We compared organizations' ratio of hourly workers using a $1M cutoff: 34% vs. 26%; t=2.03, p=.048; Programming in schools uses a $500K cutoff: chisq=7.67, p=.006

The pie chart at right shows the distribution of sites identified in the focus group by creative learning orientation. Over 90% of the Creative Learning organizations named have this as part of their mission (core, *n*=39) or include it as a regular component in their work (included, *n*=42).



Creative Learning Core[3]

1Hood Media
ACH Clear Pathways
Afro American Music Institute
Alumni Theater Company
Arts Education Collaborative
Assemble
Balafon West African Dance Ensemble
Bodiography
Boom Concepts
Center of Life/KRUNK
Children's Museum of Pittsburgh
Children's Theatre Festival
CMU CREATE Lab
Dreams of Hope
Gemini Theater
Hill Dance Academy Theater
Hip-Hop on L.O.C.K.
Hope Academy
Legacy Arts Project
Level Up Studios
Manchester Craftsmen's Guild
New Hazlett Theater CSA Project
Pittsburgh Center for the Arts/Filmmakers
Pittsburgh Girls Choir
Pittsburgh Glass Center
Pittsburgh Musical Theater
Pittsburgh Youth Chorus
Pittsburgh Youth Concert Orchestra
Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra
PPS CAPA
Prime Stage Theater
Sankofa Village for the Arts
SLB Radio Productions
Steeltown Entertainment
Sunburst School of Rock
Three Rivers Young Peoples Orchestra
Ujamaa Collective
YMCA Lighthouse Project

Creative Learning Included

Attack Theater
August Wilson Center
Avonworth School District
Boys and Girls Clubs
Braddock Carnegie Library
Bricolage Production Company
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
Carnegie Museum of Art
Carnegie Museum of Natural History
Carnegie Museums
Carnegie Science Center/Fablab
Children's Window to Africa
City of Asylum
City Theater
CMU
CMU Arts Greenhouse
CMU Neuroscience Institute
Environmental Charter School
Father Ryan Arts Center
Heinz History Center
Kelly Strayhorn/Dance Alloy
Mattress Factory
PearlArts Studios
Phipps Conservatory
Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre
Pittsburgh Center for Creative Reuse
Pittsburgh CLO
Pittsburgh Cultural Trust
Pittsburgh Festival Opera
Pittsburgh Opera
Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy/Frick Environmental Center
Pittsburgh Public Schools
Pittsburgh Public Theater
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
Point Park University
PPS Summer Dreamers
Propel Schools
Sarah Heinz House
Society for Contemporary Crafts
The Andy Warhol Museum
Union Project
University of Pittsburgh OCD/Pride

Creative Learning Supporters

Allies for Children
APOST
Grable Foundation
Penguins Foundation
PNC Grow Up Great
RAND
Remake Learning
Trying Together

3 For all tables, small organizations are shown in blue; large shown in black.

Photo: Sean Means

Emphasizing Black/Africana arts.

In the first several focus groups, the idea of Black-centered arts (Africana arts and several other related names were also used) emerged as a distinct category. That is, most groups, when asked to represent the creative learning ecosystem with sticky notes and whiteboard markers, *first* began dividing programs up by type of creative learning (e.g., put all the drama places together). But several groups created a Black or Africana Arts category, which is a different kind of categorization. Some broadened this idea (one group wrote "representation of African-centered and global practitioners) but it was clear in the listings of sites that Black-centered arts could be a meaningful group of programs.

Conversations around equity, justice, and race were ubiquitous during the focus groups. However, we heard varied orientations toward the intersection between arts and culture. In virtually all cases, focus group participants expressed a commitment to equity. However, for some this meant offering programs based on European-derived art forms to Black and Brown children, while in other instances, organizations articulated a commitment to offering culturally sustaining pedagogies that honored and celebrated Black-centered arts. In order to look more closely at this variation, we created three different codes for the relative emphasis on Black-centered arts by creative learning organizations based on information from organizational websites: **centered**, **adjacent**, and **not specified**.[4] Over half of the creative learning organizations did not specify a cultural focus. More than a quarter indicated a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and/or equity in their mission statements. Less than one-quarter of the creative learning organizations (*n*=16) explicitly called out Black-centered arts as a focus of their work.

Black Arts Centered

1Hood Media
Afro American Music Institute
August Wilson Center
Balafon West African Dance Ensemble
Center of Life/KRUNK
Children's Window to Africa
CMU Arts Greenhouse
Hill Dance Academy Theater
Hip-Hop on L.O.C.K.
Legacy Arts Project
Level Up Studios
Manchester Craftsmen's Guild
Sankofa Village for the Arts
Ujamaa Collective
University of Pittsburgh OCD/Pride
YMCA Lighthouse Project

4 We derived these attributes from organizational mission statements and keywords reported on GuideStar. For those organizations not on GuideStar, we used missions taken from organizational websites (*n*=20) or Facebook pages (*n*=1). Criteria for coding were as follows: centered = Black or Africana arts specifically mentioned; adjacent = euphemistic words such as "diversity," "inclusion," and "urban" included; not specified = no mention of a focus on cultural sustaining pedagogies. Note that these codes were based on explicit language used in mission statements/keywords and no implicit or assumed orientation was applied; it does not necessarily mean the organization does not focus on Black-centered arts.

Black Arts Adjacent

ACH Clear Pathways
Alumni Theater Company
APOST
Assemble
Boom Concepts
Boys and Girls Clubs
Carnegie Science Center/Fablab
City of Asylum
City Theater
Heinz History Center
Hope Academy
Kelly Strayhorn/Dance Alloy
Pittsburgh Cultural Trust
Pittsburgh Festival Opera
Pittsburgh Girls Choir
Pittsburgh Opera
Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy/Frick Environmental Center
Pittsburgh Public Theater
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
Pittsburgh Youth Chorus
Point Park University
Remake Learning
SLB Radio Productions
The Andy Warhol Museum
Union Project

Black Arts Not Specified

Allies for Children
Arts Education Collaborative
Attack Theater
Avonworth School District
Bodiography
Braddock Carnegie Library
Bricolage
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
Carnegie Museum of Art
Carnegie Museum of Natural History
Carnegie Museums
Children's Museum of Pittsburgh
Children's Theater Festival
CMU
CMU Create Lab
CMU Neuroscience Institute
Dreams of Hope
Environmental Charter School
Father Ryan Arts Center
Gemini Theater
Grable Foundation
Mattress Factory
New Hazlett Theater CSA Project
PearlArts Studios
Penguins Foundation
Phipps Conservatory
Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre
Pittsburgh Center for Creative Reuse
Pittsburgh Center for the Arts/Filmmakers
Pittsburgh CLO
Pittsburgh Glass Center
Pittsburgh Musical Theater
Pittsburgh Public Schools
Pittsburgh Youth Concert Orchestra
Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra
PNC Grow Up Great
PPS CAPA
PPS Summer Dreamers
Prime Stage Theater
Propel Schools
RAND
Sarah Heinz House
Society for Contemporary Craft
Steeltown Entertainment
Sunburst School of Rock
Three Rivers Young Peoples Orchestra
Trying Together

What does the creative learning ecosystem look like for Pittsburgh?

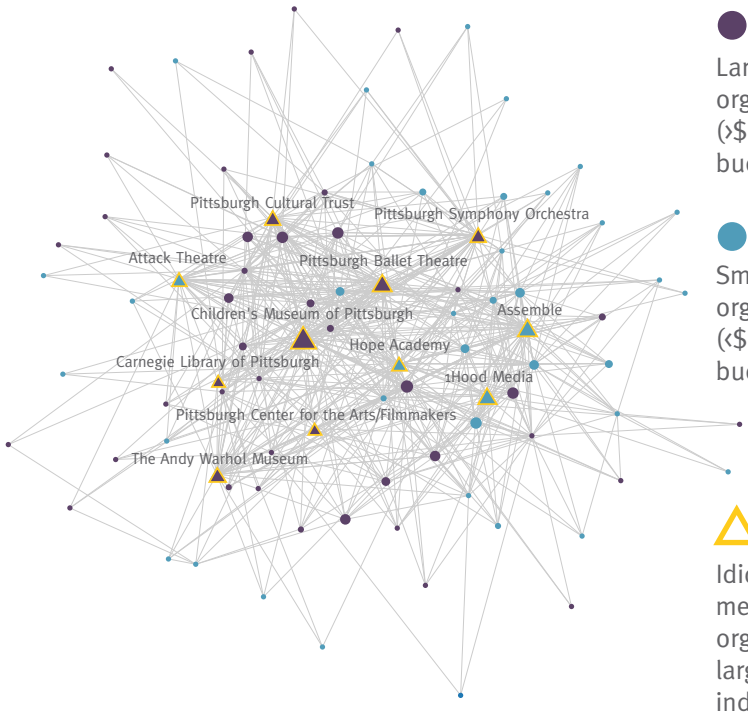
Photo: Hope Academy

We examined both survey and focus group data to consider the ways that organizations in the creative learning ecosystem view and connect with one another. We also considered how organizational attributes, such as size, might be related to these connections.

Do key organizational attributes, such as size, correspond to how central an organization is within the creative learning ecosystem? (No.)

As part of the focus group protocol, we asked each participant to list all the creative learning organizations in the region that they could think of. The focus group participants that completed this exercise cited a total of 258 organizations.

We then looked more closely at the relationship between creative learning organizations using a computational tool called social network analysis.[5] For analysis, we included all organizations that were mentioned by three or more participants (*n*=82) as well as any organizations that had been invited by The Heinz Endowments to participate, even if they were not named by other participants (*n*=6).[6] This allowed us to focus on those organizations that were identified most frequently by the focus group participants.



Large organizations (›$1M annual budget)

Small organizations (‹$1M annual budget)

Idicates most mentioned organizations; larger triangle indicates greater ecosystem centrality

5 For social network analysis, we used ORA-LITE NetScenes cst-iw for Windows 64-bit. Relative centrality was defined as those who were named by other organizations (in-degree).

6 We excluded organizations that were only mentioned by 1 or 2 participants (*n*=168), individual educators (*n*=2); and broad categories that were included without a specific organizational name, e.g., churches (*n*=6).

We found that Pittsburgh's creative learning ecosystem is a dense web of interconnected organizations (pictured). Some of these organizations are cited by peers more frequently, suggesting greater prominence in the system. The 11 creative learning organizations identified with triangles in the figure were identified by 15 or more participants in focus groups.

These central organizations are a mixture of small organizations with annual budgets of less than $1 million (in green) and large organizations with annual budgets of greater than $1 million (in blue).[7] This suggests that size of budget doesn't necessarily govern which organizations are central within the ecosystem. In fact, several smaller organizations—such as 1Hood Media and Assemble—were among the most commonly named by focus group participants.

We also explored whether other key attributes correspond with how central a creative learning organization is in the ecosystem. However, we found no significant correlation between organizational centrality and either creative learning orientation (i.e., core, included, supporter) or the relative centering of Black arts.

Are smaller networks nested within the larger creative learning ecosystem? (Yes.)

Using social network analysis software, we conducted a procedure that broke the sample into four subnetworks, based on centrality.[8] That is, a given organization within a given subnetwork was more likely to nominate others from the same subnetwork than to nominate those from other subnetworks. The characteristics of each subnetwork is not obvious at a glance, as each is made up of all types of programs. However, we conducted statistical tests to determine if particular program types were more or less common than what we would expect to see by chance.[9] We found that, relative to what would be expected by chance…

- **One subnetwork (n=28) has significantly more Black-centered arts organizations.** This was a robust finding. That same subnetwork also has more creative learning core organizations and more small organizations. The subnetwork is likely made up of groups that tend to be all three: Black-centered, creative learning core, and small organizations. These analyses do not tell us whether these groups collaborate or partner, but it does suggest slightly stronger within-subnetwork communications. These organizations tend to know each other.
- **Another subnetwork (n=23) has fewer creative learning core organizations.** The makeup of this subnetwork may reflect that creative learning supporter organizations tend to know and nominate each other.
- **Yet another subnetwork has fewer Black-centered arts organizations (n=33)** suggesting that this group may be less connected to Black-centered arts organizations.
- The final network was very small (n=4), making interpretation difficult.

It is important to note that although evidence from these analyses suggests significant distinctions between subnetworks, every group contains every kind of program, and many nominations occurred across subnetworks. In other words, it is *not* the case that large organizations don't know about small organizations or vice versa. Coupled with findings from the whole network (presented in the section directly previous), it is both the case that several elements of a full-city creative learning network exist and some evidence for subnetworks is also present. This suggests both opportunities and challenges for intermediaries and The Heinz Endowments as they try to strengthen the health of the creative learning ecosystem. For example, how might organizations that prioritize Black-centered arts and those that do not be brought together more authentically to support equity goals? And, what opportunities are there to leverage the current blending of small and large organizations so that there can be increased sharing of social and cultural resources? This last question reflects a desire expressed by several leaders of small organizations during the focus groups.

Photo:
Scott Goldsmith

7 Size was determined by the organization's annual expenses as reported in its 2017 990, retrieved from GuideStar. For those organizations that did not have a publicly available 990, size was based on self-reporting to The Heinz Endowments (n=9) or relationship with a larger parent organization, e.g., the Carnegie Institute (n=13). There were three (n=3) organizations for which we were unable to find budget data.

8 Subnetworks are based on Newman algorithm.

9 We conducted three crosstabs, one for each of the program characteristic (Black arts centeredness, size, creative learning orientation) by subnetworks. Adjusted standardized residuals with an absolute value of 2.0 or greater in a given cell indicated that the actual number of organizations were greater than would be expected with a chance distribution.

Photo:
Scott Goldsmith

What organizations were identified as most important by creative learning organizations?[10]

In both surveys and focus groups, we asked educators and organizational leaders to identify the five most important creative learning organizations in the region (*n*=174).[11] Here is what they said.

Identified by more than 20 peer organizations

1Hood Media
Assemble
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
Carnegie Museum of Art
Children's Museum of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh Center for the Arts/Film-makers

Identified by 10-19 peer organizations

Afro American Music Institute
Carnegie Museums
Center of Life/KRUNK
Hope Academy
Legacy Arts Project
Manchester Craftsmen's Guild
Mattress Factory
Pittsburgh Center for Creative Reuse
Pittsburgh Cultural Trust
Remake Learning
The Andy Warhol Museum
Three Rivers Young People's Orchestra
YMCA Lighthouse Project

10 We did not define what "important" meant. Rather, focus group and survey participants used their own definitions of what is most important for their particular organization. Rankings are therefore not meant as an impartial assessment of importance; they are meant to show which organizations the members of the creative learning ecosystem see as important for any reason.

11 The count of 174 is made up of focus group participants + organizational survey respondents + educator respondents. It is likely that it includes overlap (e.g., focus group participants that also completed the organizational survey). In addition, the nature of these data are different: focus groups were given 5 minutes to list as many important organizations as they could think of, then circle the top five; survey respondents were asked to list the top five. We present them combined here, but because of this methodological difference, most analyses related to peer nominations are conducted with focus group data only.

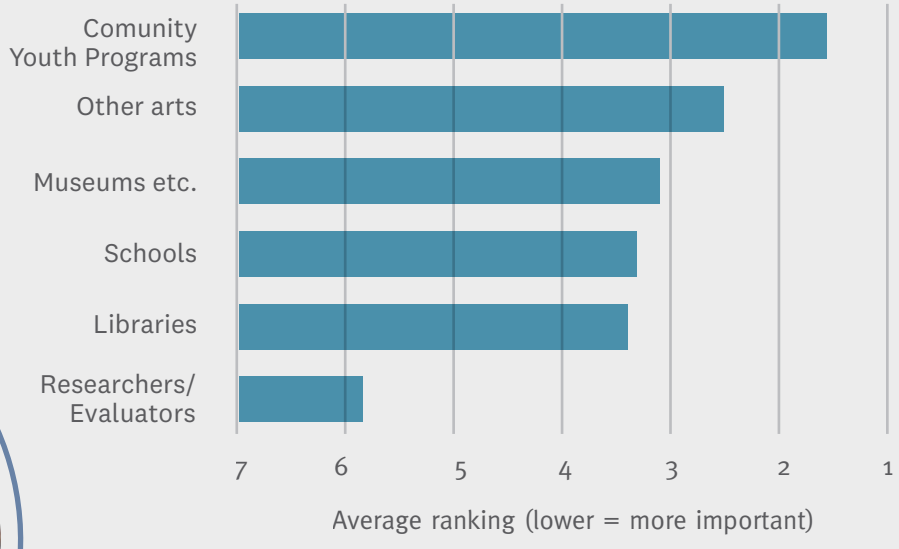
Identified by 3-9 peer organizations

ACH Clear Pathways
Alumni Theater Company
APOST
Artists Image Resource
Arts Education Collaborative
Attack Theatre
August Wilson Center
BOOM Concepts
Bricolage Production Company
Carnegie Mellon University
Carnegie Museum of Natural History
Carnegie Science Center
City Music Center at Duquesne Univ
City of Asylum
City Theater
Dreams of Hope
Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council/Lift Grant
Hill Dance Academy Theater
Level Up Studios
Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre
Pittsburgh CLO
Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy/Frick Environmental Center
Pittsburgh Public Schools
Pittsburgh Public Theater
Pittsburgh Symphony
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra
Playful Pittsburgh Collaborative
PPS CAPA
Sankofa Village for the Arts
Society for Contemporary Crafts
Touchstone Center for Crafts
Trying Together
Union Project
University of Pittsburgh OCD/PRIDE

What types of organizations are seen as important in the creative learning ecosystem?

Creative learning happens in all types of settings. When organization survey respondents were asked to rank types of organizations by importance, **community youth programs** are ranked first, with museums, schools, and libraries ranking 2nd or 3rd on average. **Researchers/evaluators** are ranked significantly less important—around 6th. The rankings were slightly different for educators but researchers/evaluators were still by far considered less important than all other types.

Photo: Pittsburgh Musical Theater



What does the creative learning ecosystem look like for educators/ teaching artists?

Photo: Elan Mizrahi

We asked several questions in both surveys to illuminate what it's like for teaching artists in Pittsburgh.

What are they called?

We intentionally used the phrase "creative learning educator" in our surveys, then asked program directors (organization survey) and educators what they call them.

58% of program directors and 89% of educator survey respondents call them(selves) **teaching artists**.

When we asked (before the teaching artist question) for titles or what they call educators, the range was enormous. In the org survey, over 20 terms were mentioned, none more than twice. Also, use of the term "teaching artist" does not appear to vary by type of creative learning organization.

What is their background?

The majority of those who completed the educator survey have been an educator for 10 or more years (66%). This could be a bias of the sample; that is, it could be that more experienced educators were more likely to complete the survey. Many (41%) have worked for 2–4 organizations, several (33%) have worked for 5–9 organizations and some (21%) have worked for 10+ organizations as an educator. In the educator survey, the median age is 42 with 7% age 23–29, 30% age 30–39, 26% age 40–49, and 32% over the age of 50. The sample predominantly identified as White (80%), with 15% Black or African American, 3% more than one race, 2% Asian, and 0 reported Hispanic or Latinx.

Photo: Elan Mizrahi

What is their professional situation?

The table below provides some information about employment status.

	program director survey	educator survey
Salaried	20%	45%
Hourly	27%	22%
Self-employed/Contractual	52%	37%
Full time	23%	53%
Part time	25%	22%
Occasional (<15 hrs/week)	51%	25%
Have health care?	—	83%
...through your employer		58%
...through spouse/partner		16%
...government, purchased, etc.		27%

In the organizational survey, large organizations are significantly more likely to have more hourly workers. Although **salaried** remains pretty constant across types, **contracts** tend to be more common for visual, music, and drama; and **hourly** tends to be more common in dance, media, and STEM. The differences across the two surveys reflect the samples. In particular, it appears that salaried, full-time educators were more likely to complete the educator survey than non-salaried, non-full-time employees—which makes total sense. We do not think the educator represents the sector in this way. In terms of annual income, over half (54%) make less than $38,700 and 46% make more than that annually.

According to the org survey, 18% stay 1 year or less, 53% stay 2–5 years, and 29% stay 6 or more years.

According to the educator survey, 58% manage other people and 58% manage a budget.

Most are fairly satisfied: The average satisfaction level was 1.59, where 1 is YES (satisfied) and 2 is NO (not satisfied).

How do they learn professionally?

In the organization survey, a large majority (80%) offer professional development (PD) to their teaching artists. Of that group, 55% focus that training more on arts/crafts versus general youth development or facilitation (18% say all their PD is this). Similarly, 85% in the educator survey reported that they attended professional development in the past 3 years.

"In one sentence, tell us why you are a teaching artist."

We asked this question in the educator survey and received 59 responses. Somewhat surprisingly, the most mentioned theme was **personal benefit** (25%) —excerpts in which educators specifically described their own benefits versus benefits for youth (though in many cases they mentioned both). Many of these described passion and lifelong commitment. For example, "Sharing my art and expertise fuels me as an artist." Another wrote, "It's who I am, and what has always come naturally to me." Several excerpts (17%) fell into the category of **empower youth** (e.g., "I hope to share my experiences and broaden young minds with options and opportunity."). And several (17%) described their education or teaching artistry as a **responsibility** or a form of giving back (e.g., "Music and theatre helped me develop the skills and perspectives that have helped me become an effective adult, and I want to pass along those opportunities, skills, and pieces of wisdom.") Finally, a few excerpts (8%) specifically mentioned the **skills** that teaching artists hoped to impart on children & youth (e.g., "I see making as a means of increasing self-esteem, grit, and self-worth.").

Snapshot by Youth:

Creative Learning in Homewood

Photo: The Heinz Endowments

As part of our exploration of creative learning in the region, we engaged a group of youth from a specific neighborhood in a series of activities that invited their perspectives of creativity and involvement in the arts in their community. The engagement spanned four days in July 2019 and took place at the University of Pittsburgh Community Engagement Center-Homewood, among other community locations, as well as at the University of Pittsburgh. In total, five youth from Homewood who were participants in the regional workforce development program called Learn & Earn were involved in this creative learning experience. The experience included the following activities:

1. **Focus group on creative learning**
2. **Intro to Photography lesson**
3. **Photomapping in Homewood**
4. **Visits to Legacy Arts Project (LAP) and The Lighthouse Project**
5. **Youth-led arts focus group with children at LAP**
6. **Visit to University of Pittsburgh course *Imagining Social Justice*, where students learned about critical theory through the lens of The Black Panther film**

Photos of the Homewood community by youth participants

Here are a few highlights from the Creative Learning Youth Engagement Experience

Initial Probing on Creative Learning (baseline).

The focus group session involved a mind-mapping exercise on our two terms: Creative and Learning. Students generated the following compilation of words when probed about word associations.

Creative		Learning	
Interesting	Useful	School	Skills
Colorful	Paint	Sports	Math
Fun	Poster	Smart	Teachers/Classmates
Unique	Mural	Subjects	Discipline
Abstract	Writing	Every day	Thinking
Singing	Drawing		Writing
Out of the Box	Pictures		
	Dance		

Schools and Creativity.

Our focus group included an insightful discussion on schools and creativity, set up by Sir Ken Robinson's TED Talk *Do Schools Kill Creativity?* Students shared that school feels most creative when they are asked to do science labs, projects, or essays that include a poster. The students lamented the lack of arts programs at their schools. One student, who once attended a school with an arts emphasis, had the opportunity to play the clarinet in elementary school. None of the other students had any chance to play an instrument or participate in any other formal (and/or memorable) arts learning at school.

Creativity in our Community.

The driving question for the photomapping experience in Homewood was: *What does creativity look like in this community?* In total, four participating students took 163 photos and videos using provided cameras. Students selected photos that best represents creativity in their community and had the opportunity to caption those photos.

Word Cloud of coding categories from Photos

Engagement with Community-based Creative Learning Programs.

The youth had the opportunity to visit the YMCA Lighthouse and the Legacy Arts Project, two Homewood-based creative learning organizations. At the Lighthouse, students were able to observe youth (whom they knew from school) engaged in music production. They also met a renowned musician who was in the state-of-the-art music studio working with a group of Lighthouse young people on a recording. During the visit to the Legacy Arts Project, the youth interviewed children about their experiences in the arts in school. Findings highlight the importance of caring and supportive teachers in school.

What did we learn about creative learning from this youth engagement?

Our youth engagement on creative learning exposed us to firsthand knowledge of the impact of creative learning on young people growing up in one of the neighborhoods where creative learning needs a broader reach. As evidenced by our conversations with the youth, creative experiences in schools are lacking. Generally, the youth had difficulty making substantive connections between what they experience in school and what they understand to be creativity. **Though opportunities exist outside of school, many young people are completely removed from the creative learning opportunities, both in the community and in the broader region. Without an early spark in the arts, youth are often excluded from the dynamic creative learning that happens in the city**. Despite this reality, the community is vibrant with rich examples of creativity, revealed through art, architecture, gardens, creative institutions, and the colorful people who live, work, and play in the neighborhood.

Photos from the Creative Learning Youth Photomapping in Homewood

Photos of the Homewood community by youth participants

Youth participants:

Eric Gary

Dreonna Lewis

Amyrah McClean

Niyasia Towns

Elizabeth Steiner (University of Pittsburgh undergraduate)

Part 2:

How do we prioritize equity?

Photo: Scott Goldsmith

Equity, as an intentional commitment of our creative learning ecosystem, was very central in the focus group discussions with creative learning organization leaders. Though equity was a distinct topic during a segment of the focus group, participants were very attuned to the importance of equity in thinking about creative learning in our region and surfaced the topic throughout the entirety of the focus groups.

During the "centering equity" component of each focus group, we introduced The Heinz Endowments' equity statement, which reads: *Young people across Pittsburgh have abundant opportunities for creative learning experiences.* The creative learning leaders shared thoughtful opinions on what the system needs in order for that statement to be a reality. Three central themes emerged—equity as (1) **race** focused, (2) **resources** focused, and (3) **reach** focused. The Centering Equity Matrix on the next page highlights the themes that emerged as well as the specific codes identified and a classification of codes based on whether comments made addressed an issue at the interpersonal, institutional, or structural level.

Photo: Scott Goldsmith

Equity As Focused On

Creative Learning Ecosystem Needs		Dimensions		
		Interpersonal	Institutional	Structural
Race	Address racism and oppression	●	●	●
	Focus on Black-centered arts		●	●
	Increase representation		●	●
Resources	Improved transportation			●
	Adequate funding of programs and organizations			●
	Address poverty in family situations	●		●
Reach (Access + Opportunity)	Pathways/pipelines into and through creative learning		●	●
	Connections between opportunities and underserved groups/neighborhoods	●	●	●
	Creative learning to be a priority			●
	Psychosocial supports for youth	●	●	●
	Collaboration		●	●

Interpersonal: Between individuals

Institutional: Within a creative learning organization or another related institution

Structural: Cumulative among institutions and in the broader region

● came up in 1–2 equity focus group conversations

● came up in 3–6 equity focus group conversations

● came up in 7–8 equity focus group conversations

Photo: Pittsburgh Youth Chorus

According to focus group participants, equity with a **focus on race** does three things (1) supports Black-centered arts creative learning organizations, (2) addresses both interpersonal and systemic racism and oppression, and (3) builds the representation of Black artists and Black voices in the creative learning ecosystem.

Equity as focus on race

First, participants highlighted the importance of an explicit focus on *Black-centered arts* as necessary to prioritize the preservation of culture. An emphasis on Black-centered arts provides capacity for the smaller, Black-centered arts organizations to maintain significance in the midst of an ecosystem with very-well-funded, legacy arts institutions. Secondly, participants also referred to the need for the broader creative learning ecosystem to *address racism and oppression*. This effort would support organizations to provide training in topics such as implicit bias and systemic racism, which emerge both at the interpersonal and structural levels. Finally, *racial representation* emerged as an element missing in the creative learning ecosystem. It is important that young people of various backgrounds are represented in organizations and that young people see professionals and artists who are of various racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Equity as focus on resources

Creative learning leaders also **highlighted resources** as important in the creative learning ecosystem and readily identified the need for increased financial resources, transportation, and additional resources to address the poverty in family contexts that can make the arts less of a priority in certain communities.

During the focus group conversation, participants indicated that the financial resources in our region can work toward enhancing equity in creative learning as they are allocated to address specific initiatives that will help programs serve youth who are less represented in creative learning programs. One focus group participant referenced a national report that states that 60% of the arts funding goes to 2% of the organizations, which is evidence of an inequitable funding structure. Additionally, a significant need for *resources to support transportation* came up in virtually every focus group. Lack of reliable transportation is a huge problem in the region, and resources used to create solutions to this problem could lessen the inequity that current exists in the creative learning ecosystem. Lastly, at the structural level, Pittsburgh must continue to explore possibilities for mitigating the *effects of poverty* on children and families. Some families lack the expendable resources needed to participate in certain creative learning opportunities that require a financial investment. Appropriately allocating resources to address poverty at the structural level would serve to improve equity in the creative learning ecosystem.

Equity as focus on reach

Creative learning leaders lamented the fact that, despite robust program offerings in creative learning, they were often unable to serve children and youth of color and those from low-income communities. This is evidence of a "reach" problem—*reach = opportunity + access* to the opportunity by those who are at the margins of society. According to participants, the **need for better reach** is manifested in the following ways: (1) There is a *lack of pathways* into and through creative learning; (2) there is a *disconnect between creative learning organization and young people in certain neighborhoods* that serve a high proportion of low-income families; (3) *creative learning is often not a priority*, but rather seen as a privilege and as secondary to academic content; (4) *psychosocial issues* are very much a reality that must be addressed by those serving youth in creative learning programs; and (5) *effective collaborations* between creative learning organizations and various institutions need to become more common if even the most marginalized youth are to have abundant opportunities in creative learning.

Photo: Mac Howison

Part 3:

What do people think about creative learning in Pittsburgh?

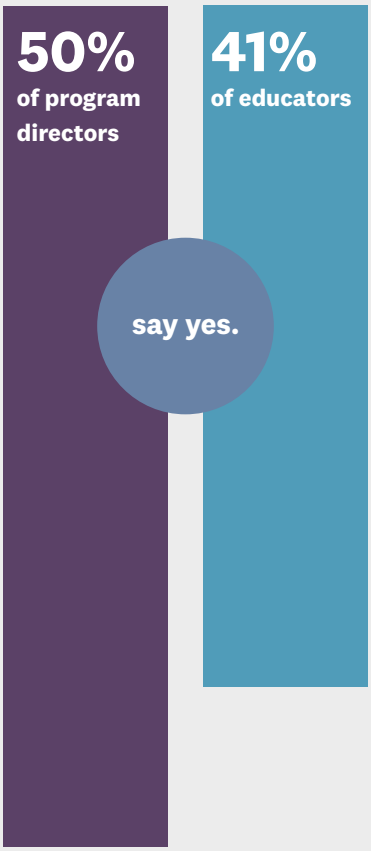
Photo: Hope Academy and Pittsburgh Ballet Theater Academy

Through this 7-month project, we heard from a lot of creative learning people through focus groups and two types of surveys. In all three of these places we asked for their feedback on where they think resources and change should be directed in creative learning in Pittsburgh.

This section presents a summary of what we heard from focus groups, survey multiple choice questions, and a new source we haven't yet presented in this report: thematic analysis of open-ended survey data. Both surveys contained a few targeted, open-ended questions. We conducted separate thematic analyses for each survey type, then incorporated them into this section. We start this section on a positive note:

Most believe we have a good creative learning communication network. We asked survey respondents a set of six questions like "I feel comfortable communicating freely with other creative learning educators" and "I interact with other creative learning educators with the intent of learning from them." We averaged their responses to create the community & communications scale. A lower score indicates more agreement (1–4). The majority of folks agree with these statements (average for program directors=1.50; average for educators =1.49). This varies by organization size. Community & communication scores are lower (better) for organizations with operating budgets of $1 million or greater. The difference is marginally significant (1.59 vs. 1.37; t=1.75; p=.09).

Do you believe that Pittsburgh has ample investment in creative learning from local foundations?



The importance of networking and communication was reflected in open-ended survey responses; when asked what they would want from an intermediary organization, the top response was networking and collaboration (more on this below). It was also reflected in a rotation brainstorm activity conducted near the end of each focus group. Participants talked about how to better connect programs for pathway facilitation, collaborative projects, and potentially shared operational capacity. The aim would be to allow programs that are different in terms of art form, audience, size, etc., to join together in an effort to bridge gaps that exist between different types of programs and even create pathways to take students from exposure in the arts to deep engagement in an art form.

In the summary of themes below, please note that although we attempted to put themes in descending order (i.e., most mentioned themes first), it is probably impossible to prioritize these in a way that does them justice. The creative learning community identified many, many areas to work on, and a top priority for some is a lower priority for others and vice versa.

If you could improve creative learning in Pittsburgh in one way, what would it be?

Photo: Scott Goldsmith

Photo: Sean Means

We asked this as an open-ended question in both surveys and received 34 responses from program directors and 57 from educators.

Access and opportunity was, by far, the most-mentioned theme across both survey types (38% of program directors; 26% of educators): Making creative learning more accessible to more children and youth. This supports what we heard in focus groups. Many survey respondents noted a need for increased access particularly for underserved groups, e.g., "I would make it more available to minority children and immigrants," and "Increase equity and access to program opportunities for all learners, across racial and socioeconomic groups." Some comments, particularly from educators, were about reaching beyond the city (e.g., "rural outreach to outlying areas"). One said, "Just need to figure out how to get the kids to the programs that already exist." This theme was also widely discussed in focus groups, where folks want to increase capacity for programming to reach underrepresented families and neighborhoods. Participants stated a need for support building connections with families and communities that are underrepresented or lacking access to creative learning. Also, several wish to prioritize funding that is inclusive of Black and Brown arts. This finding was also supported in surveys:

- 94% of program directors and 77% of educators believe African American youth have unequal access
- 98% of program directors and 80% of educators say other marginalized youth, including refugees and immigrants have unequal access

Quality and better definition of creative learning. This was a theme in focus group conversations and something that The Heinz Endowments' Creative Learning initiative directly addresses. In open-ended survey responses, this theme was more salient for program directors than educators (15% of excerpts in the organizational survey). One thoughtful response:

Creative learning in my mind entails the planning for the learning, the pedagogy, and common language about creative learning objectives and goals…Teaching with creative learning is not giving directions on skills, and media—but [it's] about ideas, research, collaboration, mistakes, experimentation, deconstruction and reconstruction and more, even for 5-year-olds… Creative learning is important, transformative, and worth time and effort that isn't always just fun. But it should always be rewarding.

One said,

"I would build an evaluation of the organizations strengths and weaknesses and use it to evaluate and help them."

Fix schools. This theme came up in focus groups but was usually not prominent (probably because of the way the focus groups were framed). This theme was the second-most-mentioned theme from teaching artists (24%) but much less mentioned among program directors (12%). Excerpts in this category were about uplifting creative learning in schools. The importance of this theme for teaching artists probably reflects that, based on survey responses, three quarters (74%) of them regularly work in schools. One stated, "All art teachers should have a budget for materials and contact time with students." Many of the "fix schools" excerpts also were coded as access & opportunity. For example, "More equitable…schools have fair distribution of resources to let them do creative learning there"; "Integrate creative learning at an early children level and in more public school settings."

Photo: Scott Goldsmith

Teaching artist profession-building was also more salient for educators (22% of responses) than directors (12%). An educator noted, "It's proper, livable compensation (financially, vacations & caretaker leaves, health coverage, gender equity)." One director simply wrote, "Increase wages for practitioners." Focus group conversations fleshed out this idea as the importance of increased resources for teaching artists to have livable wages and benefits. Teaching artists represent a key component of the ecosystem, and it is critical that they are able to work in a creative learning ecosystem that meets needs and allows opportunity for professionalization.

Creative learning advocacy was a theme that resonated more for directors (9%) than educators (2%). This idea was detailed in focus groups as effective communication and strategic messaging related to creative learning (e.g., websites, platform for the work, shared calendar, etc.) Participants described a need to communicate the types of things happening in our creative learning ecosystem. Part of the messaging should strategically reframe creative learning to be inclusive of diverse cultures and perspectives, inviting audiences to explore different types of experiences.

Other themes included **support for Black arts** (12% directors, 5% educators, e.g., "Invest in existing programs designed and run by people of color"), support for **collaboration** (12% directors, 11% educators), and support for **transportation** (6% directors, 2% educators).

What kind of support would you want from an intermediary organization?

Photo:
Scott Goldsmith

We asked this as an open-ended question in both surveys and received 38 responses from program directors and 45 from educators.

The three most-mentioned themes were consistent across program directors and educators. The most-mentioned theme was **Networking and collaboration** (mentioned by 39% of directors and 38% of educators). Many simply wrote words like "network connections" or "communications." Some had more specific ideas: "Willingness to take multi-disciplinary actions that allow arts practitioners to intersect other practices." Some were specific to partnership: "We'd welcome deeper partnerships and collaboration."

The next most-mentioned theme was **professional learning** (directors 26%, educators 27%). Many respondents simply wrote "professional development." But a few had more nuanced responses, such as, "Guidance in recruiting minority and immigrant students" and "restorative justice training." One specifically described curriculum development: "specifically for informal learning spaces that are engaging students out of school who want to learn in a hands-on, less intense atmosphere." This theme came up frequently in focus groups. Numerous participants indicated an interest in learning opportunities related to topics such as: deep pedagogy, how to support teachers, anti-oppression, trauma-informed care, building a business, and building capacity for evidence-based programs. Some noted that existing professional development offered by schools or general afterschool do not meet the specific needs of creative learning.

Third, several program directors and educators noted the importance of **spreading access** to creative learning for children and youth (directors 16%, educators 18%). Comments were sometimes very specific, e.g., "funding to bring Shakespeare plays performed by HS ages students to larger public audiences" and sometimes more general: "stronger pathways of communication to ensure all communities know about opportunities." Several were specific requests for an intermediary to help with recruitment for particular populations, e.g., "connections to populations of very young children."

Other themes included **advocacy** (16% directors, 16% educators), in which most were requests for help in making the community more aware of what creative learning organizations do, **funding/resource help** (13% directors, 16% educators), **materials/tools** (5% directors only), and **programming** (5% directors only).

In a few ways, responses diverged across the two survey types. For educators but not program directors, a theme emerged we called **connect to schools** (*n*=8, 18%)—this was a desire for support in making connections, often between schools and artists or community programs. For example, one educator wrote, "Matching funds to schools, groups and communities in need—with teaching artist (like me)." Another wrote, "Making connections with schools and school-based programs to provide access for music education." Another theme that was present with educators but not directors (though not nearly as common as "connect to schools") was that of **employment benefits** (7%). For example, "Ongoing employment opportunities, leveraging teaching artists to access health care or other benefits related to job security."

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