

Previous Successes

State's Attorney's Project



In the summer of 1999, Child's Play worked with the Englewood community to set up a writing and theatre arts residency, working with at risk children in ways that allowed them to think creatively and consider positive solutions to the concerns and difficulties they experienced in every day life. Building on the success of this project, Child's Play then developed a unique initiative with the

Cook County State's Attorney's Office, joining the office in its efforts to curb juvenile violence. For the "Project for Violence Prevention", Child's Play led classroom workshops at schools in several targeted Cook County communities, encouraging students to read and write about the issues they often confronted: violence, gangs, drugs and guns. The program focused on helping to prevent violence by giving children alternative approaches to resolving conflict in their lives, and by helping them better understand themselves and tap into the many creative gifts they possessed. The program ran for five years using theatre as a platform for encouraging change.

Byrd Academy

In 1999, Child's Play Touring Theatre collaborated with the Disney Foundation to bring a three year long in-school arts-in-residence program titled "We Are The Stories" to the Byrd Academy. Located in the Cabrini-Green housing projects, the Byrd Academy was the only school in the Midwest to receive a grant from the Disney Foundation's "Learning Partnership" program. Designated as a Communications/Technology Academy at the time, Byrd Academy was equipped with a state-of-the-art television studio, but due to significant budget cuts and loss of staff to operate this facility, the studio had been left largely untapped. Child's Play, through their residency, came and worked with the students and the teachers, as well as the parents in the community, and helped integrate narrative story, drama and technology into their studies and all areas of the curriculum, using the studio as intended. This residency was originally scheduled to last three years, but because of the success of the program, it continued for five.

The Writes of Passage - Project Millennium

In participation with Project Millennium (2000), a collaborative arts and education project organized by the Field Museum, Child's Play developed a series of workshops and performances based on the theme of the millennium - specifically, a celebration of life that looked to the past, the present and the future through stories concentrating on the passage of childhood to adulthood and the common experience that unites people across time and culture. Stories, poems and songs were collected from elementary and junior high students and developed into a new performances showcasing the voices of these adolescents and emerging adolescents called "Changing Voices". Workshops had students look at their family to explore the unique history of their own lives, and to gain a cross-generational understanding of people's heritage as we crossed over from the old, into the new, millennium. The

“Writes of Passage” project encouraged young people to try out new voices, test their boundaries and examine who they want to become.

“Bridging the Centuries” - Purdue University - A project for the millennium

In 1997, Child’s Play was invited to participate in Purdue University’s millennium project celebrating the lives of people through the arts. The project evolved from the Purdue Convocations staff’s desire to bring older generations together with younger ones through the arts and was named “Bridging the Centuries”. Having previously conducted writing workshops for the Convocations arts and education outreach program, Child’s Play was seen as the ideal company to collaborate with on the new project.

Our role in this project was to work with 15 selected schools, conducting writing workshops. Students were asked to interview senior citizens about their lives and times and then develop ideas from those interviews into stories, essays, poems, songs and visual art. Chosen pieces would then be further developed into performance pieces and performed by Child’s Play actors on stage.

The focus of this project was to demonstrate how the arts can motivate students to get involved and achieve goals, as well as think creatively, and that large segments and different age groups can explore different perspectives about their lives, their homes and their feelings, through the arts.

“The Writes of Passage” - A.N. Pritzker School and Field Museum

By 1999, Child’s Play had expanded the program initiated by Purdue to include additional participants. At A.N. Pritzker, we conducted writing workshops throughout the school, asking students to interview the seniors in their lives to tell their stories and talk about the changes they had experienced over time. We named the program “Writes of Passage”, which also became a perfect fit to “Project Millennium”, a collaborative arts and education effort that celebrated life by looking to the past, the present and the future, as spearheaded by the Field Museum. Stories we collected from elementary and junior high students were developed into a show, “Changing Voices”. The programs were successful in bringing a cross-generational understanding of people and their heritage as we all crossed over from the old century into the new millennium. For young authors, it provided a platform that encouraged them to express their voices, test their boundaries and examine who they want to become.

Kraft Art Discovery II

Through a grant from Kraft’s Art Discovery II program, Hamilton School in the Lakeview neighborhood of Chicago partnered with Child’s Play and Hubbard Street Dance Chicago to launch an integrated arts education program at the school in 2003/04. The faculty had desired more arts-integrated curriculum at the school, but felt that limited access to artist and peer resources were stumbling blocks to achieving their full goals. Having worked with Child’s Play and Hubbard Street the prior year, when both groups came to provide some professional development training for their staff, Hamilton was eager to bring both back to conduct extended workshops

the following year. This led to additional programs reaching more Chicago Public Schools with the aid of Kraft.

Kraft continued to help support Child's Play directly through the next few years, contributing to the success of several camp programs across the city, including a professional theatre camp at the Skyline Stage at Navy Pier, a two week camp at the Theatre School of DePaul, and a four week camp at Sacred Heart.

Auditorium Theatre - Hands Together, Heart to Art

Within this timeframe Child's Play also implemented a very unique and specialized camp at the Auditorium Theatre. The 'Hands Together, Heart to Art' arts camp was specially created to help children who had lost either one or both parents, and employed the healing values of theatre, music and dance to help the children through their recovery. The camp was a tremendous success and a true learning experience for all the teaching artists and campers involved. It received official recognition from the North American Association of Summer Sessions and became an Award Finalist in their Creative and Innovative Awards Program.

Gallery 37

Through a partnership with Gallery 37 Connections Program, Child's Play endeavored to break down the barriers associated with the interaction between students with special needs and mainstream students. Here we completed our first residency serving autistic children at Agassiz School and explored new techniques about teaching and working with children with autism. Other programs centered on working with deaf and hearing impaired students.

Kids for President

Created in 1988, "Kids for President" was Child's Play's first children's show with a political theme, premiering at the Goodman Studio. Throughout 1990, the company spanned the continent, performing in states from Florida on the east to Alaska on the west, gearing up for the 1992 presidential election. To craft the production, more than 5,000 young authors submitted stories, poems, rap songs, speeches and essays about campaign issues. The show reflected the best of the material collected and gave voice to children's feelings about the challenges the country and the next president would face.

In 1996, with sponsorship from Chicago Tribune, "Kids for President" toured again nationwide and reached over 750,000 children. This was also the year that Child's Play performed a special show at the Chicago Theatre for Hillary Clinton on her book-signing tour. The last tour was in 2008 at Ravinia, coinciding with presidential campaign that year.

The production has created spinoffs including "Kids for Mayor" and "Kids for Governor," and in 1997 received an Emmy Award for a "Kids for President" PSA co-produced with WPWR-TV.

"Kids for President" is both a touring theatrical production and an educational program. It is a perfect complement to existing social studies curricula with timely civics and government content, offering a creative mechanism for stimulating interest in and motivation for writing.

Chicago Young Writers Project (CYWP)

Child's Play Touring Theatre believes in the importance of contributing to the Chicago Community in which we live and work. Our principal outreach program - the Chicago Young Writers Project - aims to motivate Chicago Public School students to write and to provide teachers with drama-based methods for writing instruction.

The focus of CYWP is primarily on schools whose children are educationally at risk. By exciting children about their own abilities as creative individuals, Child's Play works to raise self-esteem and motivate young people to embrace education, reaping the life-long benefits that a love of learning creates. We identify and encourage young writers by performing the best of their stories and poems, and award Certificates of Creativity to works worthy of honorable mention.

Since 1985, the company has provided free and reduced-fee performance and educational workshops for hundreds of thousands of students throughout the city.

Curriculum for Illinois Schools

Child's Play is committed to providing programs that address the educational goals and curriculum requirements of our schools. Many of Child's Play's activities are designed to facilitate learning and the attainment of state curriculum goals in language, written communication, and the arts.