

## DreamYard Art Center Framework

In 2009, we realized that we needed to develop our own philosophy around social justice and art making. We wanted to capture our commitment to developing young people who are critical thinkers, possess a rigorous artistic practice, and are committed to social justice. So, in 2010, we worked with Dr. Susan Willcox, non-profit consultant and expert in youth development practices and critical pedagogy, to create the *DreamYard Art Center Framework*. The framework, anchored by our core values—empower, create, connect—guides the design of the curriculum at the Art Center. The questions that make up the framework were developed by the teaching artists and administrative staff during a day-long retreat.

Building off the framework, Ama Codjoe and I co-created a professional development series called the Social Justice Pedagogy Team (SJPT). The goals of SJPT are to:

- Create a common language rooted in social justice principles
- Share best practices
- Learn from veteran social justice artists and educators

Throughout the years, we have had guests like Khary Lazarre White (Brotherhood-Sister Sol), Dr. Michelle Fine (CUNY Graduate Center), and Noam Chomsky (MIT). These trainings are deep reaching and run the gamut of exploring the aftermath of neoliberal education policies in New York City, to unpacking the importance of restorative justice practices.

Our commitment to social justice and our belief that the purpose of education is to make us more fully human and see the humanity in others prepared us to take this journey with our young people.

# DreamYard Art Center Programs Framework

## Empower

- *Who am I?* → Personal Stories/Histories/Culture
  1. When do I feel powerful/powerless?
  2. What is my superpower/kryptonite?
  3. Who are my ancestors?
- *Where am I?* → Liberating/Oppressive Forces in Life
  1. What do I see? (Naming)
  2. How does it make me feel?
  3. How am I affected?
- *What can I Do?* → Awareness of Personal Power to Transform
  1. What are the root causes?
  2. What are the solutions?
  3. What skills/knowledge do I have/need to change it?

## Create

- *Who/What Inspires Me?* Artists/Themes
  1. What work do I admire?
  2. Why do I like it?
  3. What does it inspire me to create?
- *What do I want to say?* → Point of view/Perspective
  1. What am I experiencing?
  2. What is my opinion?
  3. What is my response?
- *How can I effectively express it?* → Medium/Genre/Skill Building
  1. What do I want to say?
  2. Who is my audience?
  3. What tools do I want to use?

## Connect

- *What is community?*
  1. What is our community?
  2. How can I contribute to shaping my community?
  3. What have I learned from my community?
- *Who and what do I care about?*
  1. What do we share?
  2. How do we create a space where people are listening and being heard?

3. How do we engage community?
- *What builds and breaks down community?*
  1. What am I doing to create/break down community?
  2. What is the history of this community?
  3. What are the negative and positive forces in our community?

*Created by Evelyn Bojorquez, Ama Codjoe, Jason Duchin, Patty Dukes, Aracelis Girmay, Austin Greene, Cydney Gray, Ellen Hagan, Tim Lord, Carla Repice, Kimberly Flores, Reph Star, and Renée Watson under the direction of Robyne Walker-Murphy and Dr. Susan Wilcox.*

## Suggested Readings

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- Christensen, Linda. *Rethinking Elementary Education*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, 2012. Print.
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- Wilcox, Susan. ***Why Did This Happen? Content, Perspective, Dialogue: A Workshop Model for Developing Young People's Reflective Writing***. The Brotherhood/Sister Sol: 2008.