



February 2014 | Grant Newsletters

Astor Fund Boosts Early Learning

Actors training teachers to bring reading to life; a new way to help kids catch up on reading the summer before kindergarten; techniques for weaving essential academic vocabulary words into daily classroom routines.

These are samples of how The Trust will be investing \$35 million in reading programs across the City. For all this, we can thank Brooke Astor. Known as the City's "First Lady of Philanthropy," Astor believed literacy was a key to a productive life. We agree.

"If you can't read well by third grade, you're far less likely to graduate from high school on time," says Shawn Morehead, program officer for education at The Trust. "Unfortunately, that describes most children in the City. We hope to change this by helping young readers in poor communities."

Reading a story to children is good, but it's even better to get them to act it out, tell it back to you, or make up their own. A **\$460,000** grant to **CUNY-Creative Arts Team** trains actors to work with young students, teachers, and parents to make words come alive. "Interactive storytelling improves a child's comprehension and memory while nurturing a love of words and stories," says the Team's Elyse Buxbaum.

Teachers overwhelmingly say the program helps kids meet new Common Core Learning Standards for English. The grant also will fund evaluation of the work, which will help as educators try to expand the program to higher grades.

Vocabulary is a key to success in all subjects, not just reading. For instance, if a student is asked to find the difference between 35 and 58, he has to understand that "difference," in this case, means subtraction. \$510,000 is helping **New York University** bring World of Words, a program that builds academic vocabulary, into classrooms with poor children and those who don't speak English at home.

By reading nonfiction, "they learn new words in meaningful contexts," says Susan Neuman, creator of



This Creative Arts Team-trained actor bring stories to life in ways that help develop reading and comprehension skills in young minds.

the teaching approach.

Teaching Matters has long focused on improving teaching in grades 4-12. It will use **\$120,000** to extend its approach to reading teachers of disadvantaged students in kindergarten through third grade.

“It’s important to work with students before the learning gap gets too significant,” says Naomi Cooperman, director of program design at Teaching Matters. She adds that The Trust’s grant is an “enormous opportunity to work on leveling the playing field.”

Astor's Last Gifts

\$9.2 Million From Late Heiress Goes to Education Programs

BY MELANIE GRAYCE WEST



More than six years after the death of philanthropist and socialite Brooke Astor, a first round of charitable donations has been made from a fund created with the assets from her estate, representing some of the last New York philanthropic gifts to be made in her name.

Late last week, the New York Community Trust awarded \$9.2 million in grants to New York-based organizations in support of education and literacy programs. Some \$7 million will be shared among 15 charities favored by Mrs. Astor. That includes grants to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Wildlife Conservation Society.

About \$2 million will be shared among six charities to support nonprofit programs that aim to improve reading skills among disadvantaged grade school students in New York. The largest portion of that grant, \$586,000, went to the Reading Excellence and Discovery Foundation for a program at three elementary schools in the Bronx.

The new grants come from the New York Community Trust's roughly \$43 million Brooke Astor Funds for New York City Education, established a year ago as part of Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's settlement of Mrs. Astor's estate. The attorney general's office became involved after a highly publicized saga that surrounded Mrs. Astor's final years and continued

after her death in 2007 at the age of 105 years old.

During her lifetime, Mrs. Astor was among the city's best-known philanthropists, giving out more than \$200 million through a foundation named for her late husband, Vincent Astor, a son of a John Jacob Astor IV who gave away much of his wealth.

Some \$100 million in charitable donations from her estate were locked in legal limbo after her death. A will contest pitted charities and extended family against Mrs. Astor's son, Anthony Marshall, who was convicted in 2009 for stealing millions from his mother in her final years when she had reduced mental capacity to make financial and estate decisions. He was sentenced to one year in prison on 14 counts of fraud, grand larceny and other charges. He served a few months and was released for medical reasons in August.

Ultimately, Mr. Schneiderman's office used a combination of wills, including one

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In "Astor's Last Gifts," The Wall Street Journal features Brooke Astor's [legacy to education in the City](#).

NEXT STORY: [A Hive of Creators](#)

Additional Astor Grants

Hunter College, \$300,000 to train second-grade teachers in East Harlem to help English language learners and other struggling students learn to read.

Jumpstart for Young Children, \$80,000 to test a new summer reading program for children entering kindergarten in the South Bronx. If successful, the project will demonstrate a new way to bridge the gap between pre- kindergarten and kindergarten reading instruction.

Reading Excellence and Discovery Foundation, \$586,000 to coordinate individual tutoring, teacher coaching, and parent training in three Bronx elementary schools.



AIDS United, Alicia Keys Announce Grantees of the **EMPOWERED** Community Grants Program

Community-based organizations to develop programs focused on women and HIV/AIDS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – October 1, 2013 – Four community-based organizations will each receive \$20K to help advance community-level efforts focused on women and HIV/AIDS, thanks to grants awarded by 14-time Grammy Award-winning artist and HIV advocate Alicia Keys and AIDS United. The grants are part of the EMPOWERED



Community Grants program, which is part of a broader effort by Keys to reach women in the U.S about HIV/AIDS called EMPOWERED, a cross-platform public information campaign developed with Greater Than AIDS.

The EMPOWERED Community Grants Program grantees are:

- **Creative Arts Team – Research Foundation of the City University of NY – New York, NY**
- Frannie Peabody Center – Portland, Maine
- North Carolina AIDS Action Network – Durham, NC
- SisterLove – Atlanta, GA

According to Vignetta Charles, Ph.D., AIDS United Senior Vice President, the process to review and award EMPOWERED Community Grants was the most competitive AIDS United has ever had, with 218 applications being submitted for four grantee slots, each proposing innovative and impactful women-centered HIV programs. In addition to the grantees, finalists also included:

AIDS Arms, Inc. - Dallas, TX

Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive (HIPS) - Washington, DC

Positive Women's Network (PWN-USA) - Oakland, CA

The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. - New York, NY

The Women's Collective - Washington, DC

Keys serves on the Advisory Council for the EMPOWERED Community Grants Program, and was an active participant in the grantee review and selection process.

"It was beautiful to see how many wonderful community-based organizations are making an impact around the country," said Keys. "I was so impressed by the extraordinary finalists and am excited to recognize the four organizations that will launch the EMPOWERED Community Grants Program," said Keys. "They are so committed to their communities, I am more confident than ever of the positive impact we can have together! This is just the beginning!"

"AIDS United has long supported women-centered, community driven HIV prevention and care programs aimed at women, said Vignetta Charles, Ph.D, AIDS United Senior Vice President. "That is why we are so honored and proud to have been selected by Alicia Keys and the Kaiser Family Foundation to be a part of this exciting new program. Through the EMPOWERED Community Grants Program, we are taking action to help our most vulnerable populations of women protect themselves – and those they love – from continuing the spread of the virus, and helping to create an AIDS-free generation in America."

For more information about the EMPOWERED Community Grants Program, please visit www.aidsunited.org.



8/22/12 The Bajan Reporter | Educational Theatre Expert to conduct workshops in Barbados



TODAY Tuesday, August 21, 2012

EDUCATIONAL THEATRE EXPERT TO CONDUCT WORKSHOPS IN BARBADOS

by Bajan Reporter / October 19th, 2011

Barbadian Drama teachers will have a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in Educational Theatre when noted Educational Theatre Arts specialist, Gwendolen Hardwick conducts workshops in Drama-in-Education and Theatre-in-Education at Retreat 2011, organized by the Barbados Association of Drama Educators from Friday, October 28th to Sunday, October 30th, 2011 at the Pom Marine Hotel, Hastings, Christ Church.

Ms. Hardwick, the Artistic and Education Director of the City University of New York's Creative Arts Team, will also deliver workshops on "Addressing Social/Curriculum Issues through the use of Drama". In these sessions, the focus will be on Bullying and HIV/AIDS.

Ms. Hardwick's career in the theatre spans over thirty years as an actor, writer, director, producer and educational theatre specialist. As an actor, she portrayed Betty Shabazz in *El Hajj Malik* and created the role of Mrs. Breedlove in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*.

Internationally, she has developed and implemented educational theatre models with theatre companies in Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Jamaica and the Republic of Ireland. She spearheaded CAT's Bilateral Educational Support Through Theatre project (B.E.S.T.) – a three year collaboration with three South African universities- developing and directing theatre pieces addressing HIV/AIDS education and health issues affecting women and children.



Cecily Spencer-Cross with Director of "The Memory of Water" at FCH, the City... The Barbados Association of Drama Educators promotes the use of Theatre Arts across the curriculum. The Association holds workshops and facilitates theatre based activities for Barbadian students.

Persons interested in attending the event must contact [Mrs. Cecily Spencer-Cross](mailto:mspencercross@hotmail.com) at 429-4224 or email mspencercross@hotmail.com

Art of the story aids literacy education

By Matthew Tungate
matthew.tungate@education.ky.gov



Helen Wheelock tells an interactive story to incoming kindergarten students as teachers from around the state observe during the Next Generation Arts Academy at Model Laboratory Elementary School (Madison County).

Drama artist Helen Wheelock's use of voice animation, mixed with call and response and sprinkled with a touch of silliness, held her students' rapt attention as she read *Ruby in Her Own Time* in a Model Laboratory Elementary School (Madison County) classroom last week.

"Flap, flap, flap, fly," she said, elongating the final letter and raising it in pitch as she thrust her outstretched hand upward. "Let's all say that."

Dutifully, the students repeated every word, just as Wheelock had said them. She asked the students to fill in details in the story, like where did the little bird fly, and responded reassuringly to their answers.

After she finished, Wheelock told the students she got the story from a book. They couldn't wait to get their hands on it.

The audience was not elementary students but teachers – one of whom would later say Wheelock "had us eating out of the palm of her hand" – who were learning how to use storytelling and other art forms to develop early literacy skills in their students.

Since 2000, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and the [Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts](#) have held weeklong [Summer Arts Academies](#) for teachers to receive training in four art forms: music, dance, visual art and drama. This year, two Next Generation Academies ran concurrently: one for [integrating world languages with the arts](#) and a new one for integrating emergent and early literacy with the arts.

Twenty-two elementary school teachers signed up for the new academy, joining the 36 who attended the world language arts academy, which is in its second year. Most of the teachers went in pairs – a content-area teacher and an arts teacher, according to [Jeffrey Jamner](#), director of School Programs for the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts in Louisville and coordinator of the center's Summer Arts Academies for teachers.

Jamner said his goal is to keep the arts academies relevant to issues in education, and few issues are more relevant nationally and in Kentucky than early literacy.

Young children naturally learn by acting, playing, singing, exploring and engaging different parts of their brains, he said.

"Our goal is to tap into that power and apply it to reading," he said. "Integrating the arts is just plain good teaching, because it's how kids learn. Our goal

Art of the story aids literacy education

is to make learning come alive in as many ways as we can, and in a child's world, that involves artistic, creative activities.”

Giving teachers more skills in different art forms gives them more strategies and more entry points for students, whether that is in early literacy or more traditional classroom subjects, Jamner said.

“We’ve been showing teachers how to lead activities that include drama, dance, visual arts and music when teaching social studies and world language,” he said. “With literacy, we’re doing the same thing – we’re really focusing within literacy on comprehension.”

Jasmine Rutherford, a 4th grade language arts and social studies teacher at Model Laboratory Elementary, also is a drama club sponsor. She said she using drama will become a greater part of her classroom after attending the academy.

If a child can communicate what they have read or heard, then they have comprehension, Rutherford said.

“Getting up and acting something out makes you really have to know what you’ve read and then you get to interpret it and make it your own,” she said.

Robert Duncan, state arts and humanities consultant, noted that literacy is about more than reading text. For instance, understanding what a visual artist was trying to express in a painting or a musician in a piece of music is literacy.

“How many times can we copy a Van Gogh painting and write a report about him?” he asked rhetorically. “This says nothing about artists and why they do what they do or what type of statement are they trying to make. That is another part of literacy – reading an artwork, making those inferences and learning how to communicate your viewpoints.”

Literacy also is about communicating your beliefs as well, Duncan said. Kentucky’s new English/language arts standards include [communication](#), he said.

While the academy largely approached literacy through storytelling, teachers also learned to use visual arts, dance and music.

“Throughout history, story has engaged children, and it’s been part of teaching – the oral tradition – and connecting that to text, but investing the children so that they care what happens in the story,” Duncan said.

“Based on nearly 20 years of experience in arts education and seeing how children really engage in learning and how teachers engage in that process, I believe very strongly that if we put the right experts together to see what we can do to better integrate arts education and literacy efforts with young children, great things can result,” he added.

If Kentucky wants graduates who are college- and career-ready, schools have to include the arts, Jamner said. An [IBM study](#) shows that creativity is the most highly prized attribute among international CEOs, he pointed out.

Duncan said numerous studies show the importance of arts education. For instance, UCLA education professor James Catterall did a recent [study](#) that found that students with strong backgrounds in the arts in high school have stronger community involvement.

The arts academies are built on research that shows that arts positively affect students at different age groups, Duncan said.

“We’ve got to find something early on that engages the students and encourages them to follow this,” he said.

Art of the story aids literacy education

The path to dropping out of school can begin in kindergarten, Duncan said.

“If they’re entering school unprepared with reading and writing skills, then that can be one of the most difficult things to pick up on and get caught up on,” he said.

[Chanda Britt](#), a preschool teacher at Woodlawn Elementary (Boyle County), said she is not very knowledgeable about using the arts to teach, but she sees the ways they can be combined with literacy and other subjects to help children.

“This has been perfect, particularly for preschool-aged children, because I think so many people have an idea of kindergarten readiness that it’s just knowing your letters and sounds, and that’s not it,” she said. “I think more students struggle with reading in kindergarten who don’t have a broad vocabulary and who have limited experiences and problems with listening comprehension. I think reading problems stem more from those areas than just letters and sounds. So this academy is really addressing those areas that can help build up preschoolers’ previous knowledge that will help them in kindergarten.”

Britt said the interactive storytelling is a great way to engage students.

“Preschoolers like to be involved, they like to talk, and they like to move, so that will be perfect for story time in my room,” she said. “For preschool, if your kids aren’t engaged, you have chaos. Preschool teachers are the masters of engagement anyway. This gives us more tools to put in our toolbox.”

Librarian and drama teacher [Tina Dunn](#) and music teacher [Kim Black](#) teach together at Murray Elementary School (Murray Independent).

Dunn agreed that the interactive storytelling she has learned at the academy will better engage students.

“You will change kids,” she said. “They will love to come to your class. They will love stories, maybe being motivated to read a book.”

Black said she and Dunn, who have been to four arts academies, take back what they learn and teach it to traditional classroom teachers.

“I think the clinicians here have been really good to make it a very simple literature-art connection,” she said. We can go back and share with our teachers, and I think they’ll be comfortable trying those things.”

Black said literacy is really about communicating.

“All children want to communicate,” she said. “They may not all be able to communicate verbally, they may not all be able to communicate in every single way, but this is another way to communicate.”

FOR MORE INFO...

[KDE’s Literacy page](#)

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DAILY NEWS

Tuesday, December 11, 2007



BE OUR GUEST: LYNDA ZIMMERMAN, arts advocate

Arts can be an invaluable tool in effort to help poor children

The National Center for Children in Poverty reports that 88% of New York City's children live at or near the poverty line. This is, on its own, a terrible statistic. But it gets worse.

Research shows that without structured support and intervention, children raised in poverty lag behind their more affluent counterparts in every academic sphere: readiness, performance and the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

This could be disastrous given the need for an educated workforce in the information and service economy of New York.

Fortunately, one of New York's most important sectors, the arts, is providing innovative and effective ways to help address the challenges these children face.

The CUNY Creative Arts Team (CAT) has pioneered the use of drama as a catalyst for learning in classrooms and community sites throughout the city.

At CAT, we know that all young people deserve the opportunity to reach their potential. Our engaging, thought-provoking interactive drama programs help them to do so.

You can find our professional actor/teachers in all five boroughs of the city – in classrooms of every grade, homeless shelters, Rikers Island and community sites

– merging role-play and learning to produce a unique educational environment.

You can also find them working with parents and caregivers on how to use role-play to defuse stressful situations with children and teenagers. One mother recently commented, "Things are different at our house since CAT came into our lives!"

We believe that classroom teachers should be able to use interactive drama every day, in every area of the curriculum. Therefore, we also offer three graduate certificates in which educators and teaching artists from all over the world learn, hands-on, how to use our pioneering approach. The certificates are accredited through CUNY's newest school, the School of Professional Studies.

Offering unique ways to connect with students

There's an old teachers' adage – "Tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand." Under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein, the arts – including CAT's interactive drama programs, as well as those of

our peer organizations such as ArtsConnection, Studio in a School and Lincoln Center Institute – are being recognized for their proven ability to involve children and their powerful impact on teaching and learning.

Each student has a unique voice and perceives the world through a unique lens. The arts have a special ability to help young people find their voices and hone their

focus on achievement and success. To that end, since CAT's founding in 1974, we have engaged more than a half-million New Yorkers of all ages.

In a note to CAT's program director last year one teacher wrote, "Once in a great while, magic happens in a classroom. Your gifted and talented messengers of drama-in-education never failed to create such magic. Quiet, shy students opened up before our eyes. Sensitive, creative students demonstrated their gifts and talents. The experience of teamwork in solving our problems had a wondrous effect on our class's cohesiveness."

CAT's interactive drama programs help teachers create student-centered classrooms, where learning is organic and achieving is natural. Indeed, interactive drama is an exciting and proven strategy to achieve that goal and lay a firm groundwork for New York's young people to become participatory citizens and achieve their dreams.

Parents who would like to know if CAT is available in their schools or neighborhoods and professionals who would like more information on CAT can contact me at lynda.zimmerman@mail.cuny.edu

Lynda Zimmerman is founder and executive director of the Creative Arts Team, the resident arts-in-education program of the City University of New York.