

## **Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance 2019 Arts & Pre-K Excellence Awards**

In its 2017 publication [Agenda: Pre-K](#) the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance documented how arts-based learning positively impacts the physical, social and cognitive wellbeing of young children and sets them on a solid path to becoming better learners and citizens. With lead support from PECO, the Cultural Alliance announces the second cycle of the **Arts & Pre-K Excellence Awards**, which recognize and celebrate successful arts and culture programs that serve young children in Greater Philadelphia.

The purpose of the **Arts & Pre-K Excellence Awards** is to highlight the benefits of infusing early learning with arts and culture in ways that spark young children's creativity, teach them new social/emotional or cognitive skills and improve behavior. The awards also raise awareness of the extensive array of excellent Pre-K arts and culture programs in our region and inspire more Pre-K providers to embrace arts-based learning. Two types of awards will be made:

1. One (1) award of \$8,000 to an arts and culture organization in Greater Philadelphia with an exemplary program for young children between birth and age 5.
2. One (1) award of \$3,500 to a Pre-K provider in Greater Philadelphia with a successful arts-based learning program.

### **Why Arts and Culture Matters in Pre-K:**

Two of three Philadelphia children under school age spend the majority of their waking hours in out-of-home care. Of the children in licensed care, only half of all 3- and 4-year-olds—and a far smaller portion of infants and toddlers—attend a high-quality<sup>1</sup> early learning program. There is an urgent need to make Pre-K more effective in order to give all children a good start in life.

The arts provide rich inquiry and exploration, developing children's creativity, confidence, social and emotional skills and self-regulation, as well as communication and early literacy skills. Too often, early childhood teachers are stuck in traditional product-oriented art tasks that children take home (think: handprint turkey on paper plate) and fail to use music, dance and art-making to their full potential. Children may passively consume performing arts on TV without being encouraged to experience, participate and create these art forms for themselves. These are lost opportunities to inspire children's creativity and growth. The last few decades have seen increasing pressure in the U.S. to push classroom-style academics into Pre-K so that children are "ready" for kindergarten, even further diminishing time spent in creative play. However, other countries have taken vastly different approaches, emphasizing creative play over traditional academics to achieve equal or better outcomes in math and reading.

Trained art and music educators have the skills to help early childhood teachers transform their classrooms and curricula so that the arts enrich children's cognitive and social/emotional development in ways that are age-appropriate and inclusive of children's special needs. However, many Pre-K providers, especially those serving low-income families, are either unaware of these benefits or can't afford to incorporate arts and culture into their curriculum. The Arts & Pre-K Excellence Awards recognize successful programs that use arts and culture effectively and that serve as a model to inspire others.

### **Criteria/Guidelines**

- Cultural organizations must be current members of the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance and be located in the Greater Philadelphia region (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery or Philadelphia counties).
- Pre-K providers must be located in the Greater Philadelphia region (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery or Philadelphia counties). Local sites of providers based out of the region are eligible.
- Cultural organizations and Pre-K providers must have at least a five-year track record of providing excellent arts and culture programming to Pre-K students.

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<sup>1</sup> High quality is defined by the state as Keystone Stars rating of 3 or 4 or the equivalent national accreditation. Quality ratings are based on teacher education, quality of interaction and environmental factors and are correlated with child development outcomes.

- Cultural organizations and Pre-K providers must have the capacity to continue providing excellent arts and culture programming.

Elements of exemplary or successful programs and curricula include (but are not limited to):

- Evidence of the program or curriculum's positive impact on learning, developmental or behavioral outcomes
- Track record of serving economically disadvantaged and/or culturally diverse families
- Experience with quality improvement systems
- Working with parents/caregivers to make experiential as well as product-oriented arts at home, and building parenting skills
- Partnering with an organization that provides professional development to early childhood programs to ensure that early childhood teachers obtain credit for time spent learning arts education techniques
- Contracting with art educator(s) to teach/coach/model new methods in the classroom, alongside existing staff
- Combining in-school experiences with off-site field trips to cultural institutions
- Consulting with art educators to individualize creative play/arts for children with special needs
- Consulting with art educators to re-design or adapt classrooms to create "studio space" or outdoor play area (depending on space availability)

An independent advisory committee of experts in early-childhood education will review applications and select the award recipients.

**To Apply**

Visit [www.philaculture.org/prekartsawards](http://www.philaculture.org/prekartsawards) to view instructions and submit the application form. Applications will open on February 13, 2019. The deadline to apply is **April 12, 2019**. Award winners will be announced in the fall of 2019.

Applicants should provide a concise explanation of their program or curriculum, how it addresses any of the above elements or other elements that demonstrate excellence or success and how the award funds would be used to strengthen or enhance the program or curriculum.

Applicants are encouraged to submit supplementary materials that demonstrate activities related to providing excellent arts and culture programming to Pre-K students in the Greater Philadelphia region. These materials can include:

- Up to 10 high resolution images (*JPEG or PNG files*)
- One video clip up to 4 minutes in length (*either an MP4 file or URL link*)
- Up to 5 documents such as flyers, brochures or other supporting materials (*PDF files*)

Supplementary materials are encouraged, but not required. Each applicant can submit, but not exceed, the above list of materials. It is acceptable to provide a link to the above materials if they are hosted on a webpage. If you choose to submit supplementary materials please make sure they are of high quality and support your written narrative. Please send all supplemental materials or links to Allie Vanyur at [allisonv@philaculture.org](mailto:allisonv@philaculture.org).

In addition to the monetary award, Award winners will also be publicized to ensure greater community recognition. Award winners will be required to write an article about their program or curriculum and the use of award funds for the Cultural Alliance's newsletter and other publications and to promote their award through their own communications channels.

Please direct inquiries about the **Arts & Pre-K Excellence Awards** to Allie Vanyur at [allisonv@philaculture.org](mailto:allisonv@philaculture.org).

**Acknowledgments**

The **Arts & Pre-K Excellence Awards** receive lead support from PECO. Additional support for the Cultural Alliance's **Agenda: Pre-K** initiative has been provided by PNC Grow Up Great, CHG Charitable Trust and Lida Foundation.