

Art for All

Research shows that problem-solving and critical-thinking skills are strengthened when a child is exposed to art. This impacts their future academic achievement and success in school. At Family Focus, we believe early arts education helps level the "learning field" across socio-economic boundaries and gives children from some of Chicago's lowest income communities the opportunity to explore the rich and varied forms of art.

On any given day at one of our centers you will find young children joyfully participating in **visual art, music and dance** classes, while at the same time developing language and motor skills. Children express their deepest feelings with a paint brush, or singing in a choir, or writing poetry. Art opens emotional doors, and for some is the path to pursue academics.

You will also see children and teenagers working on **digital media projects**, resulting in short films that they write, direct, film and edit - developing vital **computer skills** that can open future doors. Students serve as **actors** in these documentaries, building team spirit as well as their own confidence and self-esteem. Others will **create and perform their own poetry** at local poetry competitions such as *Louder than a Bomb* and Redmoon Theatre's *Sonic Boom*, giving a creative outlet for their voices.

Our extensive network of collaborative partners allows us to leverage existing resources and provide **ballet instruction** to young girls who would not otherwise be able to afford it, and by participating in the **May I Have This Dance ballroom dance competition** in partnership with Redmoon Theatre. As part of this program, students create a CD with music that they perform and produce. Support of the program also allows us to continue and expand enrichment opportunities such as attending performances at the **Joffrey Ballet**, field trips to local museums or receiving art instruction during one of our **40 after-school programs**. Local festivals such as **Roots Aurora** or **Gospel Fest** are sponsored by our centers and help celebrate cultural heritage and traditional dancing.

Classes for parents include **jewelry making, sewing, and quilting classes** that help channel creativity, improve self-esteem, and teach skills that help increase their family's income. We also have **creative writing classes** and **grandparents** in our Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program **blogging** at our technology labs located in our centers.

The Arts Initiative helps broaden the world view of children and families – encouraging them to reach for higher levels. By [supporting this program](#) you will enable Family Focus to provide additional artistic activities for over **2400 children** in the Chicagoland area, while enriching our community and developing the next generation of artists and art lovers.

