

KID CITY Year 2 Evaluation:

Partner impacts

KID CITY is a partnership between the City of Maplewood and Z Puppets Rosenschnoz that empowers communities through the power of playfulness and public art across age, class and culture, putting youth at the forefront of creative community revitalization. For the KID CITY evaluation, Wilder Research conducted interviews with KID CITY partners about how they and their organization have been impacted by participating as a partner with KID CITY. We interviewed six KID CITY partners who worked for the following organizations: City of Maplewood (3 interviewees), schools in Maplewood (2 interviewees), and social service organizations in Maplewood (1 interviewee). This report summarizes these partner interviews.

Impacts for partners

In talking with partners about the impacts they experienced due to their participation with KID CITY, three main categories of impacts were mentioned: connecting with constituents in new ways, connecting with likeminded partners, and learning new ways of approaching their work to achieve their goals.

Connecting with constituents

All partners talked about connecting in new ways with their constituents, mainly speaking about connecting with their constituents using playful and arts-based strategies. Many partners talked about how using arts-based strategies also helped them connect with constituents they had not connected with before or who are underserved in Maplewood. It should be noted that connecting with constituents was the primary reason that most partners chose to participate in KID CITY.

“The fun parts of KID CITY make it the easiest, most nonthreatening way to build relationships [with community members].” –KID CITY partner

“We didn’t really have a way to reach kids outside of recreation programs. Now we are reaching them in schools through the arts.” –KID CITY partner

“As a police department, we don’t really have many opportunities for positive interactions with the community and especially younger kids. KID CITY helped us accomplish the goal of community engagement and positive interactions with the community.” –KID CITY partner

Connecting with partners

Almost all partners talked about forming new relationships or deepening their relationships with other KID CITY partners. For some partners, KID CITY was the catalyst for building relationships with specific organizations, with one partner saying of another, “We built a relationship that we never had before.”

Additionally, one partner noted that it was because of a partnership that they were able to connect with a particular group constituents.

“We work with others differently now. We realized that when we work together, it can be better. KID CITY was a way for partners to learn what others are doing and begin working together.” –KID CITY partner

“KID CITY was one of the first steps for us to get involved with other organizations in our community.” –KID CITY partner

“Before KID CITY, I had never interacted with [partner]. We connected with a different cross-section of Maplewood because of that partnership.” –KID CITY partner

Learning new approaches or ways of working

All partners said that through KID CITY they learned to approach their work in new ways. These new learnings were seen as important for connecting with constituents that partners had not connected with before or who are underserved in Maplewood, with one partner saying, “KID CITY helped us to work well with diverse audiences and participants.” In addition to approaching their work differently when designing and delivering KID CITY activities, some partners continued to approach their work in the way that KID CITY taught them – even after their KID CITY activities were completed.

“I learned the value of incorporating plain fun into what you do. We start our meetings with a joke or positive thought for the day. Before KID CITY, I wouldn’t have thought about doing those things.” –KID CITY partner

“I always try to incorporate physical aspects into my classrooms – brain warm-ups, something to activate the mind. I stole a lot of KID CITY’s ideas for how I do brain warm-ups.” –KID CITY partner

“KID CITY encouraged more officers to go to community events. Having these events and seeing those who take up the opportunity, you see the officers who really care about the community.” –KID CITY partner

“KID CITY has helped us think strategically about how we use the arts. We are holding onto the question of how to supplement our work with arts ideas or resources.” –KID CITY partner

Summary and moving forward

The findings from these six interviews with partners provide some more detail to the “partner impacts” as seen in the KID CITY Approach and Impact document. Moving forward, Wilder Research recommends systematizing how these perspectives from partners are gathered, tracked, and analyzed. This will help provide insights regarding how to design and deliver KID CITY for maximum impact.

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