

Studio 2 Multimedia Program Review

The VIP Multimedia Program provides both real-world multimedia skills and social skills to marginalized youth, with an emphasis on violence prevention and media literacy. Various forms of digital media are utilized to engage youth, develop their skills in different types of media, provide a platform to tell their own stories about issues affecting their lives, and harness their creativity in promoting messages about school and community safety. Program staff work with groups of youth to provide them with hard skills in photography, graphic design, illustration, film and music production. Studio 2 currently operates programming for 3 Day Treatment groups, 2 music production groups, 1 photography program and 1 magazine creative program.

The program is funded by United Way of Greater Toronto and is geared to service youth who reside or attend school in underserved neighbourhoods in Scarborough. The objective of this program is to provide youth through multimedia components with violence prevention knowledge, as well as to provide opportunities for skill development in this area. Another goal for the program is to provide youth who display passion and talent in the various streams of multimedia the tools needed to move forward with a career in the arts industry, for example, helping them create a portfolio.

Program Successes

Studio 2 has been very well received since the beginning of the program over a year ago. Community organizations and young people quickly heard about the program and wanted to know more about it. The reputation of Studio 2 has been evidenced by the many requests for services both onsite and in the community. Several grassroots youth programs have requested that Studio 2 help with creating some of their branding materials, including logo design, branding workshops for young people, and designing custom brochures. These community groups include Recreating Our Community (ROC), Glendower Demanding Change (GDC), Rexdale Adolescent Warriors (RAW), and Breaking the Cycle (BTC).

Studio 2 staff was approached by YWCA to collaborate with them and White Ribbon Campaign for an upcoming conference. Studio 2 presented a workshop on poster design basics. The goal of the workshop was to have youth use PhotoShop to create a poster as a PSA against violence. Two workshops were presented and the audience was divided by gender. Each group created several posters representing their views on violence, in particular gender-based violence. This conference was geared at youth in high schools around Toronto and aimed to create awareness of gender-based violence. Studio 2 staff and VIP youth participants also developed the creative flyer used to market the conference to young people across the city.

Studio 2 has been successful in engaging youth people currently in EMYS Day Treatment Programs. In the Fall of 2008 Multimedia staff worked with 2 classes and in 2009 began working with a third group. This has proven to be a wise collaboration as the youth look forward to attending sessions in Level 3. Program staff work collaboratively with other EMYS/VIP programs as well. Studio 2 has worked closely with the HRDC group, ADAPT group and the volunteer group occasionally.

The TDSB Expelled Student Program partnered with Studio 2 for programming. This partnership is significant as it allows youth to leave their physical building and come to EMYS to receive multimedia and journalism training, for which they will then receive academic credits for their work.

Multimedia staff and youth participants worked intensely over the summer to create a riveting ad campaign to bring attention to gun violence among young people. The project produced a print ad campaign as well as a PSA commercial. The youth and staff were very proud of the work accomplished and are thrilled that Rogers Television will be airing the PSA across Eastern Canada. The print ad was added to the VIP VOICE newsletter that the Journalism program created.

Another important success to be noted was the creation of a sound studio in Level 3. This added element within the Multimedia program has generated immense interest among young people in Scarborough. The Sound studio is yet another tool to help teach young people technical knowledge to create and produce their own pieces of work.

Program Challenges

While the program has experienced many successes, there have been challenges. One of the most notable challenges is the limited capacity to engage and work with youth from all 7 identified neighbourhoods. It has become evident that not all youth are willing to travel far outside of their neighbourhood to attend Studio 2 programming even though there is much interest. This is shown in the demographics of youth attending programming; they are predominantly from neighbourhoods in close proximity to EMYS.

The amount of interest and requests for services have created a workload that can be overwhelming for one staff member. It became clear recently that Multimedia program staff must prioritize requests in order to ensure quality of work.

Client Statistics

The majority of youth engaged in Studio 2 programs are youth from under-served neighbourhoods, most often are of African or Indian descent. Most youth are between the ages of 13-21. There is an equal gender balance.

Total number of youth served: 93

Groups:

Photography - 4, Music Production I - 4, Music Production II - 4, Media Literacy - 6, Magazine Creative - 5, Photoshop - 5, Documentary Film (fall) - 4, Day Treatment - 26, Ad Campaign - 8, Documentary Film I - 3, Documentary Film II - 6, HRSDC - 6, Photography (spring) - 11

Workshops & Training:

Involve Youth group - Kennedy/Eglinton - 16, Involve Youth group Dorset Park - 16, Glendower Demanding Change - 15, Involve Youth REXDALE - 18, John McRae PS Career Day - 30, Common Ground - 24, PATHS TDSB Alternative - 4, Unity in the Community - 30

Types of Referral Sources:

- YOWs, teachers, RISE staff, community partners, youth referrals

Most youth participate for the duration of programs which is often around 12 weeks. However, there have been several youth that have left prior to the conclusion of programs.

Aggregate Data

Youth registered in the multimedia programming are part of the CIMM Evaluation Project, one of United Way's initiatives. There have been some challenges around gathering accurate data

from these groups as youth are hesitant to volunteer much information. There is an identified need to ensure that youth understand the importance of evaluation and confidentiality that we ensure them. There have been significant challenges gathering 'post' data from youth in the program as many of them simply stop attending programming before the program is complete. This continues to be an area of focus and improvement for the program staff.

Future Directions

The Studio2 multimedia program has been running for approximately one year. We currently run the program 5 days a week. The youth who are interested and participate in our programs come from varied backgrounds. The majority of the youth we service are from underserved areas. However, distance is an issue, and our core programs are often filled with participants from closer proximities. Distance is a barrier for youth who reside in neighbourhoods further away and therefore not participating in our core programs

This continues to be one of our goals at Studio2. We are currently in discussion to work with youth from Kingston-Galloway, which has been an area of Scarborough we've had some difficulties reaching. The Multimedia staff will be working harder to create opportunities to train youth in their own communities in order to address this concern. If this staff meet success in this area it is anticipated that through building relationships and establishing credibility, the programming will create a bridge for these young people from their community into Level 3.

Another area of focus will be the creation of program curriculum. This has been identified as an area that hasn't been developed much in the first year but is a priority for the upcoming year.