



Mission Statement

Destiny Arts Center's mission is to inspire and ignite social change through the arts.

Purpose Statement

Destiny Arts Center is a catalyst for culturally relevant arts and action. We provide a safe space for youth to express themselves, advocate for social change, and build peaceful communities.

Values

What values guide the organization? What important and lasting beliefs or ideals are shared across the organization about what is good or bad, desirable or undesirable?

- Love, Community and a Culture of Welcome
- Commitment to Conflict Resolution, Peacebuilding, and Nonviolence
- Creativity
- Authentic Self-expression
- Embodiment as a practice, resource and vehicle for expression
- Art as a vital tool for social change
- Rigor, Self-discipline, and Excellence
- Programs that emphasize deep, high-quality learning experiences
- Highly-skilled Teaching Artists
- Diversity and Community-based Leadership

Assumptions

What rationale bolsters the organization's approach to its work? What things need to be in place for the organization to be able to continue its work?

- All young people are inherently valuable and have the power to create change.
- Young people thrive when they create lasting bonds with adults and peers who accept, support and care about their current experiences and future aspirations.
- There is a fundamental barrier to learning when youth do not feel safe or at peace. Culturally responsive, trauma-informed creative practices can help young people build resilience, increase their sense of well-being, and overcome challenges to feeling safe and peaceful.
- Artistic practice, creation, expression and performance, especially within cohesive group settings, support a young person's sense of well-being and long-term development.



- Regular arts participation leads to better academic results, workforce opportunities and civic engagement. Such benefits can have far-reaching effects, especially for low-income youth of color who are least likely to have access to the arts.¹
- Artistic or otherwise, the hard work of pursuing excellence instills young people with a sense of perseverance, confidence, and increased hope for the future.
- Teaching Artists, especially those who identify as practicing artists, artists of color, and LGBTQ artists, are often at the forefront of inspiring personal and community action on issues of social significance. As such, our artists are central to Destiny Arts Center's ultimate success.
- Skilled, diverse arts administrators and leaders with a variety of backgrounds, strengths and capacities are needed for us to do this work.

Environmental Context

What events or conditions external to the organization influence the work?

- Large numbers of young people in Oakland and the Bay Area do not have access to a consistent, high-quality arts instruction.
- Systemic and institutional violence, including legacies of racism, the school-to-prison pipeline, homophobia and sexism deeply impact families and youth in Oakland and the Bay Area.
- Oakland and the Bay Area have rich histories of social change movements, diverse residents and thriving arts communities.
- Destiny Arts Center operates within a rich ecosystem of youth development, social justice, arts, and community-based organizations. We recognize that collaboration is essential to achieving our ultimate impact.

Organizational Context

What conditions in the program or organization itself influence the work?

- Destiny Arts Center is at a pivotal moment. After nearly 30 years of service, Destiny now reaches approximately 4,000 students each year and looks towards the future with new and founding staff members on board and a strategic planning process underway.
- Historically rooted in martial arts, dance, and violence prevention, Destiny Arts Center is now a model arts organization that offers a unique range of high-quality programs that

¹Catterall, J. S., Dumais, S. A., & Hampden-Thompson, G. (2012). *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies* (Rep. No. 55). Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts.
<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Arts-At-Risk-Youth.pdf>



cultivate youths' creative development, confidence, and self-esteem.

- To create inclusive, culturally responsive learning environments for youth, Destiny intentionally brings diverse groups of youth and teaching artists together and develops leaders from the communities we serve, focusing on queer, women, and people of color.
- Despite the rapidly rising cost of housing and the displacement of long-time Oakland residents, Destiny Arts Center owns the building where its administrative offices, resident companies, and onsite youth and emerging artist programs are housed.
- Because of our building, Destiny is now positioned to incubate and host cutting-edge performances that showcase the relevance of multigenerational art-making and the talents of Bay Area artists who actively contribute to our local arts ecosystem.

Problems and Needs Addressed

What specific conditions does the organization hope to change?

- Young people in Oakland and the Bay Area need:
 - More opportunities to feel grounded, safe and confident within their own bodies.
 - Access to youth-centered spaces that support their development as leaders who make significant contributions to their communities.
 - Opportunities to develop healthy, meaningful relationships with groups of adults and peers from diverse backgrounds.
- Youth in general, but especially low-income youth of color, do not have regular access to high-quality arts experiences. Additionally, they do not have consistent access to professional artists who reflect their cultural backgrounds.
- The school-to-prison pipeline and the wider criminal processing system disproportionately affect young people of color, and the consequences of this fact are community-wide.
- The stories and voices of low-income youth, youth of color, justice-involved youth and LGBTQ young people are too often unheard or relegated to the margins.

Constituencies

Who does the organization intend to affect with its strategies?

Primary: Young people living in Oakland and the Bay Area, particularly youth of color, youth from low-income backgrounds and LGBTQ youth.

Secondary:

- Caregivers, friends and extended family members of Destiny Arts Center's young people, particularly in our more intensive onsite programs
- Destiny Arts Center Alumni
- Teaching Artists
- Destiny Arts Center's Resident Companies and Emerging Artists



- Our surrounding Oakland and Bay Area community, including neighbors, local schools (including public, private, and court and community schools), community-based organizations and arts institutions

Strategies and Tactics

What is the plan of action to produce the desired outcomes (strategy)?

Teach classes grounded in movement-based arts to help young people become confident, grounded and socially connected

- Keep programs accessible for participants, ensuring cost is not a barrier
- Establish a culture of welcome that supports young people's sense of safety, value, and interpersonal connection
- Deliver a rigorous curriculum in onsite classes and other educational settings (e.g., public schools, court-run schools, community-based organizations) that:
 - Includes culturally relevant movement and arts-based classes
 - Supports young people in developing their artistic voices and their ability to advocate for themselves and others
 - Integrates National Core Arts Standards and 21st Century Skills
 - Includes conflict resolution and violence prevention skills, teaching self-defense skills where relevant and when it can be done safely, effectively, and ethically

Support the effectiveness and sustainability of teaching artists

- Devote sufficient financial and budgetary resources for teaching artist positions
- Provide career pathways for Destiny alumni as resident artists, teaching artists, or administrative staff
- Provide a consistent learning community for local arts professionals, facilitating their development as teaching artists and teaching artist mentors
- Support teaching artists in developing trauma-informed, asset-based educational approaches to mentoring youth
- Commission work from artists-in-residence and emerging artists to enrich our diverse Bay Area arts scene and engage our surrounding community.

Build a community of caring adults that value young people

- Ensure spaces and opportunities exist for Destiny Arts Center caregivers to connect with one another
- Partner with arts and education organizations to expand Destiny's offerings
- Engage an alumni network through ongoing activities, engagement and employment
- Host local artists and companies with the capacity to provide training and performance opportunities to Destiny Arts Center's young people

Refine and document Destiny Arts Center's signature approach to culture-making

- Identify, refine and integrate the key elements of Destiny Arts' instructional philosophies and techniques into all class offerings and all training for teaching artists
- Use peer-led media arts efforts to document Destiny Arts' creative work and to share and broaden the impact of creative youth development practices.
- Share best practices with youth development peers, educators, and artistic partners.



Outcomes for Young People

What measurable changes are expected?

Young people who participate in Destiny Arts Center programs:

Peaceful

- Collaborate effectively with others to achieve a common goal
- Take responsibility for their own part in interpersonal and social dynamics
- Make values-based decisions that positively impact their lives and relationships
- Experience and express a sense of care for themselves, others, and their world through words and actions.

Powerful

- Value their own creative self-expression
- Radiate self-esteem and confidence, a positive sense of self, and hope for the future
- Increase their health and wellbeing
- Face conflicts without violence and with resilience, or the ability to recover and grow from difficult or harmful experiences
- Access and develop a web of support from mentors, teaching artists and other adults
- Ignite and advocate for social justice, particularly for those relegated to the margins of society or for those unable to advocate for themselves

Creative

- Practice critical thinking skills and self-reflection
- Take risks and demonstrate willingness to innovate and improvise
- Value the arts and the role of artists
- Use the arts and embodied practices as an effective means of authentic expression throughout their lives
- Work towards excellence by honing their skills and deepening their current arts practice(s)
- Connect their own arts practice(s) to the work of other artists and the cultural and historical contexts from which they grow

Outcomes for Caregivers and Community Members

Caregivers and community members will:

- Attend or participate in Destiny Arts Center activities and events
- View Destiny Arts Center as an important, culturally relevant local resource that provides affordable, high-quality programs and performances that benefit the entire community
- Value young people and their perspectives
- Access resources that support healthy ways of engaging and interacting with their children and other family members
- Feel supported by and connected to the Destiny Arts Center community



Outcomes for Professional Teaching Artists

As members of the Destiny Arts Center community, professional teaching artists will:

- Understand Destiny's unique trauma-informed, culturally responsive approach to youth development and incorporate Destiny's creative youth development framework in their work
- Deepen their experience and improve their technique as artists (e.g. directing student work and with resident companies)
- Hone their skills and tools as arts advocates, educators, and mentors to support the next generation of artists
- Make meaningful contributions to local and regional artist community and education systems
- Find a sense of place and build community among other artists

Ultimate Impact

In the long term, how will the world look when the organization has achieved its purpose?

When we are successful, young people live meaningful, connected, creative lives and become advocates for an inclusive society. They value themselves and others, respond rather than react to situations, and practice peace and love over violence.