

The Art Of Future Success

(NAPSA)—One of the best ways to paint a picture of future success is through after-school arts programs. That's the finding of a collaborative study between the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and several national and local arts organizations. It concludes after-school programs help "at-risk" students:

- Reduce truancy and improve academic performance.
- Increase their abilities to communicate effectively and resolve conflict.
- Improve ability to work on tasks from start to finish and to work in teams.
- Decrease the frequency of delinquent behavior.

The findings are significant, as child and school safety has become a hot topic for today's parents and politicians alike. Studies show almost 30 percent of all juvenile offenses are committed on school days between 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. According to Americans for the Arts, after-school arts programs can help curb these alarming statistics.

The group says research demonstrates after-school arts provide an effective and affordable alternative to youth detention and police-centered crime prevention.

Americans for the Arts worked



Drawing On Experience—Schools, communities and parents can use a multimedia kit to help start up after-school arts programs.

with its project partners to develop the YouthARTS Tool Kit. The kit is meant to give schools and communities detailed information on how to plan, run and provide training and evaluation for after-school arts programs. It's now available as a Web-based tool at the site www.AmericansForTheArts.org.

The online tool kit, which is funded by the MetLife Foundation, includes best practices and information about creating and running after-school arts programs, as well as information on:

- **Program Planning**—The site helps users learn to identify community needs and assesses their capacity to provide an effective arts program. It also shows how to create a logic model for program plan-

ning and evaluation.

- **Team Training**—The site gives how-to information on selecting, training and sustaining artists to work in alternative environments. Information is also provided about collaborations between artists, case workers and educators.

- **Evaluation**—The evaluation section guides the user on how to conduct a rigorous evaluation on both the program implementation process and program outcomes. The section describes the benefits, basic concepts and challenges of program evaluation.

- **Cost, Resources and Advocacy**—The site features useful information on budgeting, funding and advocating for arts programs for youth at risk.

It's thought the newly available online tool kit can help communities erase some of the negative stereotypes sometimes associated with today's youth. Perhaps equally important, parents can use it to urge schools and communities to start after-school arts programs.

"Young people who are involved in making something beautiful today are less likely to turn to acts of violence tomorrow," says former Attorney General Janet Reno. "The arts provide opportunities for youth of all backgrounds to do something positive and creative with their talents—and time."