Kids United Through Dance

World Arts West announces the launch of a new children’s education initiative. In September 2012, we will begin a Cultural Ambassadors Program (CAP) for young people in grades K-3.

After much research and community input, World Arts West created a strategic plan to transform the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival into a multi-platform, multi-venue, geographically-expanded series of programming. Education is core to our future goals. We will create increasing opportunities for people to learn about diverse dance forms and traditions from Festival artists. We are developing new programs to leverage introductory exposure into lifelong connections with dance forms and cultures from around the world. Over time, we aim to improve cultural literacy—increasing people’s knowledge of world cultures.

Our strategic plan directs us to implement programs that get more children dancing. Childhood obesity is on the rise and helping our young people discover a love for physical movement is a key element of our youth programming. The larger goal for this initiative is to build the next generation of dancers and cultural leaders within the diverse communities of the Bay Area. By exposing children to diverse dance forms early, and building on-going relationships with dancers teaching in their communities, we hope to plant the seeds for a future filled with ethnic dance.

Our new Cultural Ambassadors Program (CAP) will bring a group of culturally-diverse dancers and musicians into communities through partnerships with schools and community centers. Our goal is to facilitate connections between the children and the ambassadors of diverse cultural arts forms, and eventually, enable participating children to become ambassadors of those cultural forms among their peer groups, as well.

This first round of CAP workshops will be conducted in the Richmond School District, and will culminate in a community performance at the East Bay Center for the Performing Arts where the students will share what they learned with their families. We are beginning the program with children in grades K-3, and will expand programming as funding allows.

Do you miss our People Like Me arts education program?
Yes, the program was magnificent and one day we hope to once again offer dance performances for children in professional theater settings throughout the Bay Area. We received a great deal of feedback from K-6 teachers during the last season of People Like Me. Teachers reported to us that it had become very difficult to bring students to performances as a field trip, due to financial and time constraints. More time was spent on the bus or in the car going to and coming from People Like Me performances than the children actually spent in the theater watching the dance. Participating teachers asked us to create dance programs in their schools, and we began talks with experts in the field to design our new programming. Research has shown that in-depth, in-school workshops over a span of time will be more effective at connecting young people with dance and music than one-time, resources intensive field trips.

That said, once in-depth, in-school dance programming becomes part of education in schools, then it will be exciting to bring back the inspiring field trips.

To contribute or become involved with our arts education programming, please call 415.474.3914.