

History and Milestones

"We change the lives of kids."

-Bob Bates, Artistic Director and Co-Founder

"Being at Inner-City Arts is the best and most important thing in my whole life."

- Inner-City Arts Student, 4th grade

When budget cuts eliminated arts instruction from Los Angeles public schools in the late 1970s, it was up to local communities to fill the gap. Skid Row area schools and students, already struggling, were at a clear disadvantage—until Bob Bates and Irwin Jaeger teamed up to form Inner-City Arts in 1989. Knowing the importance of the arts in the lives of all children, Bob, an artist and teacher, and Irwin, an entrepreneur, were determined to bring those benefits to the city's poorest children.

Through a groundbreaking—and enduring—partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District, students from Ninth Street Elementary School were brought to Inner-City Arts' first studio space on Olympic Boulevard where they received hands-on instruction in the visual and performing arts. In its inaugural year, Inner-City Arts served a total of 60 elementary school students.

When Inner-City Arts moved to temporary quarters on the grounds of Ninth Street School, Bob and Founding Executive Director Beth Tishler worked even more closely with students and classroom teachers. Bob and Beth saw firsthand the many ways Inner-City Arts' unique approach to arts education supported student gains in literacy and overall achievement. Through observation, they also identified new opportunities to strengthen and expand Inner-City Arts programs.

Recognizing the benefits available to their students through Inner-City Arts programs, principals and teachers from other schools soon signed on. Specialists in music, theater and dance joined Bob and Beth as studio teachers. Inner-City Arts forged collaborations with other educators and the academic community to develop new programs targeting specific student needs. Programs were created to support classroom teachers, bringing the lessons of the studio to other academic disciplines. Partnerships with the cultural community and other service providers extended the range of arts experiences for students and families.

During these crucial early years, the support of key partners and funders enabled Inner-City Arts to expand its programs and establish a permanent home, an oasis of creativity and learning in the heart of Skid Row:

- In 1992, Inner-City Arts received the first of several multi-year Title VII grants from the **U.S. Department of Education** supporting student achievement and the development of teacher training programs
- In 1993, a gift from the **S. Mark Taper Foundation** enabled the purchase of a 10,000-square-foot former auto body shop at the corner of Kohler and 7th Streets, establishing a permanent home for Inner-City Arts
- The purchase of adjacent land in 1994 and 1998 created a one-acre site for the Inner-City Arts campus and the opportunity for **future growth**
- In 1995, Inner-City Arts partnered with **California Institute of the Arts (CalArts)** adding animation to the Inner-City Arts core curriculum and an intensive weekend program in animation for high school students
- Also in 1995, Inner-City Arts began a collaboration with researchers at **UCLA's Graduate School of Education and Information Studies** to evaluate the effectiveness of its programs
- In 1998, Inner-City Arts received its third **U.S. Department of Education** Title VII grant, *Project ALL (Arts for Language and Learning)*, to develop new programs targeting the needs of English Language Learners

At the time of its 10th anniversary in 1998, Inner-City Arts was serving 11 schools and more than 400 students each year through school day, after-school and weekend programs.

Although teachers had long reported improvements in focus, engagement and creativity among students who attended classes at Inner-City Arts, an evaluation of Inner-City Arts programs by researchers at UCLA's Graduate School of Education and Information Studies proved conclusively that children who attended classes at Inner-City Arts, and whose teachers actively participated in Inner-City Arts programs, scored dramatically better in math, reading and language arts on statewide standardized tests.

These results confirmed the vital role of the arts in education, and the effectiveness of Inner-City Arts programs for high-poverty children. Inner-City Arts' record of success brought increased recognition and opportunities, contributing to further growth and innovation:

- A \$1million grant from The Annenberg Foundation established the Inner-City Arts—Annenberg Professional Development Program in 2001
- The *Coming Up Taller Award* was granted to Inner-City Arts by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, also in 2001
- A \$1.24 million grant from the State of California in 2002 supported the Inner-City Arts campus expansion project
- Also in 2002, *Project ALL* evaluations confirmed the positive impact of Inner-City Arts student and teacher programs on student achievement
- In 2002, professional development programs offered at Inner-City Arts received accreditation from the Los Angeles Unified School District
- A program for middle school students at highest risk of academic failure was developed by Inner-City Arts staff and piloted at Harrison Middle School in 2002
- In 2003, Inner-City Arts Artistic Director and Co-Founder Bob Bates received the \$100,000 *Use Your Life Award* from Oprah's Angel Network, in support of middle school programs
- **Phase II** of the Inner-City Arts campus expansion project, a new Visual Arts Complex and courtyard, was completed in 2003, more than doubling existing studio space and program capacity
- In 2004, the **Early Arts Learning Initiative (EARLI Arts)**, developed by Inner-City Arts staff to meet the needs of kindergarten-third graders with especially low levels of English language proficiency, was piloted
- Also in 2004, Inner-City Arts record of success and innovation was featured as a case study by **Harvard University's** prestigious Bruner Loeb Forum
- In 2005, with the support of a **U.S. Department of Education Arts in Education Model Development and Dissemination Grant**, Inner-City Arts staff developed and implemented a nationally recognized program for low-performing middle school students, **Arts in the Middle (AIM)**

- In 2006, **The Inner-City Arts—Annenberg Professional Development Program** collaborated with **UCLA’s Graduate School of Education and Information Studies Center X Teacher Education Program** to develop and provide arts training for new teachers committed to working in high-poverty schools
- In the Fall of 2006, Board members Monica and Philip Rosenthal announced the **Rosenthal Theater Challenge**, and contributed \$2 million toward building The Rosenthal Family Theater
- In 2007, ground was broken for **Phase III** of the campus expansion project, which will bring an additional 16,000-square-feet to the Inner-City Arts campus
- In 2007, a grant from **The DreamWorks Animation Charitable Foundation** established the **DreamWorks Animation Academy at Inner-City Arts**
- **Phase III** of the campus expansion project, scheduled for completion in August 2008, will dramatically increase the number of students, educators, community partners and families served at Inner-City Arts each year

Approaching its 20th anniversary in 2009, Inner-City Arts is recognized as one of the most effective and innovative arts education providers in the nation, and serves as a model for other programs around the world. More than 150,000 elementary, middle and high school students have come to Inner-City Arts for hands-on instruction in the visual and performing arts, and more than 5,500 teachers and community partners have participated in professional development programs at Inner-City Arts.

Yet the need for Inner-City Arts has never been greater. Within a 2.5-mile radius of our campus, there are 42 elementary schools with an enrollment of 30,000 of the city’s poorest children. All attend schools that participate in the Title I free or reduced lunch program. Most are learning the English language. Many are classified as homeless by the local school district. All are among the country’s most at-risk for dropping out before completing high school.

Inner-City Arts provides life-changing opportunities for these children.