



**JUSTIFICATION FOR WAIVER OF RENT
TUCSON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
November 23, 2015**

I. Overview

Arts Express has a rich heritage leading back to its incorporation in 1998 and its recognition as a 501(c)3 in 1999. Founded by arts educators Drs. Joan and David Ashcraft, the mission of Arts Express, Inc. is to change lives and build a better community by creating opportunities for children and adults to learn and experience the power of the arts. Arts Express serves the people of Pima County and strives to: (1) Establish partnerships with local programs, businesses, artists and other professionals who share similar goals; (2) Provide access and meaningful arts engagement opportunities for all individuals (regardless of age, race, ethnicity, income, gender, religion, sexual orientation or ability); and (3) Maintain the highest artistic standards in all its endeavors.

Arts Express productions like *A Hero's Salute* and *Let Freedom Sing* provide opportunities for civic engagement and family entertainment for the entire community. Through its arts education programs (including the Behind the Scenes-Broadway and More program, Express Yourself Vocal Competition, National High School Musical Theatre Awards/Ben Vereen Southwest Region and the Saturday/summer Arts America programs), Arts Express opens up the world of the arts to youth. Arts Express aims to teach, cultivate and enrich young people so that they might experience the power of the arts while learning to become productive citizens. As a trusted arts education provider for 15 years, Arts Express primarily serves Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) students and families. In fact, in 2014-15, 72% of the Arts Express arts education enrollees were TUSD students.

In addition to its partnership with TUSD, Arts Express forged partnerships with influential entities and individuals who share the goal of enriching the quality of life for Southern Arizona youth. Of particular significance are the partnerships with the Broadway in Tucson, Tucson Symphony Orchestra, Arizona Opera Company, UApresents, and Opening Minds through the Arts (OMA). These associations bring additional experience and expertise, expanding opportunities for FAYA students.

Operating under a November 2008 –June 2013 lease, Arts Express rented office/storage space from TUSD at the nominal fee of \$1/year at Naylor Middle School. During the summer of 2011, Arts Express was asked to relocate to the PACE building located at 594 S. Campbell Avenue. After facilitating this move, Arts Express received an amendment to the lease agreement from TUSD designating the new address and adding the requirement that Arts Express pay for utilities and maintenance. Over the last four years, Arts Express has faithfully paid for the building utilities and maintenance. The organization was granted a waiver of rent for the space for the 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2015-16 periods based on its provision of services to TUSD students and families at below-market rates and financing of scholarships for many TUSD

students. In order to continue these services for TUSD students and families, Arts Express hereby requests a continued waiver of rent for use of the PACE building during the 2015-17 period (through June 2017).

II. Provision of Quality Summer Arts Programming for TUSD Students at Below-Market Rates and Financing of Scholarships for Needy Students

Arts America (formerly called the Fine Arts Youth Academy) provides summer arts immersion programming for students grades 2-12. Held in the month of June, half day and full day options are available. The morning session (8:00 am – 12:00 noon) is comprised of classes in various art forms, including dance, visual arts, choral music, band and orchestra. Students participate in two 1 hour and 50 minutes classes with a 20 minute break provided between classes. Standards –based arts instruction is aligned to the students’ individual age and skill level. Students are engaged not only with their assigned arts teacher but also with artists in master class situations to expand their individual technical abilities. Arts America instructors address the skills and techniques that allow students to create art, understand art in specific contexts, and develop skills to assess and reflect on their own art creations as well as artwork of others. A supervised lunch and recreational period is held from 12:00 noon to 1:00 pm.

In the afternoon, students participate in the study and production of a musical theater production, complete with music, dance, drama and stagecraft. Auditions are held during the first three days of the session and assigned roles for all students are then announced. The program culminates with student performances, art exhibits and musical theatre productions that are open to the public.

Through the years, Arts Express has worked hard to keep the Arts America tuition affordable for TUSD families. Through effective management, low overhead and development of a dedicated team of volunteers, Arts America is by far the best summer program value in town as shown by the following comparison:

	Classes Rate/Hour
U of A Youth University: \$375-\$395 for one-week session; \$435 for two week session	\$12.42 - \$19.75
St. Gregory’s Mind's Alive Summer Program Classes: \$295/2 wks for half day; \$490/2 wks for full day	\$11.80 (HT) and \$9.80 (FT)
Catalina Foothills Community Schools Summer Program Classes: \$120/wk for half day; \$220/wk for full day	\$6/hr (HT) and \$6.29 (FT)
Arts Express Arts America Summer Program: \$415/4-weeks half day; \$795/4-weeks full day	\$5.19 for (HT) and \$4.41 (FT)
	Junior Musical Theatre Rate/Hour
Catalina Foothills Community Schools Junior Musical: 3 wks 4 hrs at \$415	\$6.91
Arts Express Fine Arts Youth Academy Junior Musical: \$415/4-weeks half day	\$5.19

Assuming a minimum of a \$2/hour difference between Arts America and other local summer programs, Arts Express saves families \$160 each summer (\$2 x 80 hrs of programming). For 2015, this savings totaled \$10,080 for TUSD students and families. Because Arts America operates on a small margin, any increase in rent or other overhead would be passed on directly to Arts America students (primarily TUSD families).

Arts America fills the gap for arts education in Southern Arizona, providing intensive summer arts study for at-risk kids. Arts America seeks to provide access to the arts for every child in the community. Students from all economic situations are able to attend the Academy because the playing field is leveled through scholarship opportunities. On average, scholarships are provided to approximately 88% of the students based on financial need and recommendations of school counselors and teachers. Scholarships are based on the Federal Government's Income Qualification Scale for public schools. A parent or guardian completes the application and provides documentation to support their financial need. Supporting documentation includes the most current W-2, front page of the most current Federal tax form, or most current schedule C form (self-employed). All services and scholarships are provided without discrimination based on race, religion, gender, age, disability, national origin or sexual orientation.

Because an overwhelming majority of Arts America's enrollment is from TUSD, most of the program's scholarships are provided to TUSD students. In 2015, Arts Express provided Arts America scholarships for TUSD students as follows:

	# Students	\$ of Scholarships
TUSD students qualifying for and receiving Arts America– Summer scholarships in 2013	55	\$18,860

Arts Express generates funds for scholarships via its community events, individual and corporate donations as well as grant and foundation applications.

III. Provision of Quality Saturday Arts Programming for TUSD Students at Below-Market Rates and Financing of Scholarships for Needy Students

The demand for a quality arts education program on the weekend has prompted Arts Express to provide a 6 week arts program on Saturdays. Miller Elementary School, a Title I school on Tucson's southwest side, was the first site for this program which began in Spring 2013. This program has continued since then, providing a Saturday program in the Fall and Spring. Students attend six 2-hour classes from 8:30am to 10:30am, with separate programming provided for Kindergarten – 2nd grade and 3rd – 5th grade students. A variety of art modalities were offered, including visual arts, dance and music classes. The program culminated with a showcase for student families and friends.

	# Students	\$ of Scholarships
TUSD students qualifying for and receiving Saturday program scholarships in Fall 2014 and Spring 2015	47	\$3,055

Program planning is now underway for Spring 2016.

IV. Provision of Quality Broadway Behind the Scenes Programming for TUSD Students at Below-Market Rates and Financing of Scholarships for Needy Students

Arts Express believes that for today's students to be future innovators and leaders, they need to experience the benefit of the arts in their community. Arts Express conceptualized the *Behind the Scenes* program as a vehicle to open the world of the arts to local youth. The program was developed in 2011 in partnership with Broadway in Tucson and expanded to other art forms in partnership with UApresents.

Each BTS program is tailored to the age-range that is appropriate for the production and the themes of the production itself. In order to provide an optimum learning experience, BTS programming begins in the classroom before the show and extends through post show education as follows:

- **Pre-Program Education** – Arts Express connects with the attending schools prior to the performance to assist with integrating the topics of the upcoming performance into the curriculum. Study guides and other educational materials from the production are provided to the schools to use as tools.
- **Saturday Session**
 - ✓ **Workshop** – A two-hour workshop is led by a highly qualified theater professional, focused on a topic specific to the production. For example, students in the *Sister Act* workshop learned about comedy improvisation and its use on stage. The *Diavolo* workshop focused on architectural dance using chairs and tables as props.
 - ✓ **Behind the Scenes Experience** – Next, the students get a behind the scenes look at the show's production. During this segment, students learn what it's like to live and perform on the road as a Broadway performer and what it takes to produce a Broadway show and adapt it to each venue. For instance, for the production of *Gershwin & Me*, the students met with Michael Feinstein himself (the star of the show) who spent 30 minutes providing an close-up-and-personal talk and question/answer period. Two of the lead performers of *I Love Lucy* met with the students and told personal stories of how they got their start on Broadway.
 - ✓ **Lunch** – Students then have a short break for lunch and a time for relaxation with other students.
 - ✓ **Showcase** – Students perform a short showcase for the public as they arrive for the matinee, highlighting the skills they learned during the workshop.
 - ✓ **Matinee** – Students attend the matinee of the Broadway performance with designated chaperones. Teachers are encouraged to attend with their students in order to provide a direct connection with the learning process. In addition, parents may buy tickets and attend with their student if desired.
- **Post-Program Education** – Arts Express follows up with each school to provide the tools for post-show discussion and assessment of the program.

For the 2014-15 school year, Behind the Scenes programs were offered for the following productions: *Flashdance*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Zoppe Family Circus*, *Kodo*, *Sequence 8* and *Newsies*. Alice Vail Middle School, Holladay Magnet Elementary School, Naylor Middle School and Utterback Magnet Middle School enrolled their students in the programs.

	# Students	\$ of Scholarships
TUSD students qualifying for and receiving Behind the Scenes scholarships in 2014-15	107	\$6,955

V. Summary

In conclusion, please consider a two-year waiver of rent for Arts Express based on the following benefits of TUSD’s partnership with Arts Express:

Direct Benefits of TUSD’s Partnership with Arts Express

- Arts Express provides quality arts education programs, including Arts America-Summer, Saturday Program and Broadway Behind the Scenes.
- A majority of Arts Express arts education enrollees are TUSD students (72% in 2014-15)
- By keeping overhead low, Arts Express provides Arts America summer programming at a below-market rate (a savings of \$10,080 for TUSD students and families in 2014-15)
- Arts Express generates funds and awards scholarships based on financial need (in 2014-15, scholarships totaling \$28,870 were awarded to TUSD students).

	# Students	\$ of Scholarships
TUSD students qualifying for and receiving Arts America– Summer scholarships in 2015	55	\$18,860
TUSD students qualifying for and receiving Saturday scholarships in Fall 2014 and Spring 2015	47	\$3,055
TUSD students qualifying for and receiving Behind the Scenes scholarships in 2014-15	107	\$6,955
Total for Sept 2014-August 2015 Period	209	\$28,870

As demonstrated above, the benefits that Arts Express brings to TUSD students and families far outweigh the proposed \$9,600 in rent. Moreover, any increase in the Arts Express overhead would have to be passed on directly as higher tuition for TUSD students and families. Given the current economic environment, such an increase would be extremely difficult for TUSD families to manage and equally as difficult for Arts Express to raise from other sources. Ultimately such an increase could be the demise of this relatively small but demonstrably effective program. Therefore, TUSD’s support of this successful partnership by means of a continued waiver of rent is essential to the ongoing provision of this valuable arts immersion resource.