

A TASTE OF BROADWAY

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Proposal

A. Background, Activities, and Credentials of the West Side Cultural Center

Founded in 1988 by Nanci Callahan, the West Side Cultural Center is now celebrating its sixteenth year of production. The West Side Cultural Center's headquarters are located at 136 West 70th Street in New York's upper west side. It was founded for the purpose of bringing cultural and educational programs to the community that had not been previously available.

The West Side Cultural Center has become a major producer of "Taste of Broadway," a semi-annual theatrical production. Every spring and winter "Taste of Broadway" brings together several stars from current Broadway shows. These stars perform for 2,000 children who are brought in by buses from five different boroughs of New York City.

Top five milestones for "Taste of Broadway" are:

1. Creating a successful program for Board of Education's Attendance Incentive-Drop Out Prevention /Students in Temporary Housing Program (AIDP).
2. In the last six years of "Taste of Broadway" production, we have serviced more than 20,000 students.
3. Colleges and Universities have all sent their finest students to the West Side Cultural Center for on-hands work experience. These include: NYU, SUNY, Baruch, School of Visual Arts, and High School of Environmental studies.
4. West Side Cultural Center provides 20 jobs annually for young students who need credits and experience for their resumes.
5. Broadway stars from past performances include Footloose, Noise/Funk, Civil War, Godspell, You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown, Thoroughly Modern Millie, Big Apple Circus, Bat Boy, and Suessical the Musical, to mention a few!

The West Side Cultural Center is proud to have accomplished these milestones. In fact, "Taste of Broadway" remains to be the most effective program for the Board of Education's AIDP Program. The program is successful in motivating children to stay in school rather than drop out, and has helped to increase the grade point average of schools in the five boroughs.

B. Project Description

Taste of Broadway is a semi-annual Broadway Showcase presented by the West Side Cultural Center for ‘at risk’ children in the New York City Public school systems.

There are two productions each year, “Taste of Broadway Spring Celebration,” and “Taste of Broadway Holiday Celebration.”

Both of these programs feature live performances from cast members of Broadway’s most popular current shows! (Of course we want to provide students with the most exciting programs and with the best production values, so we are hard at work on the next “Taste of Broadway Show.”)

Each of the productions will serve approximately 2,000 students from the New York City public school systems that have achieved an above average grade point average. This serves to help students strive for a high academic achievement in their education for the whole year.

Taste of Broadway’s Holiday Celebration also includes gift bags for all 2,000 at-risk children who are able to attend the performance!

C. Problem To Be Addressed

Back in 1996, the Board of Education had tried to decrease the number of drop-outs by creating after school study programs and tutoring classes for those students who had poor grade point averages and the tendency to drop out of school altogether.

The number of students who fall into the at-risk drop out category is of great concern to us as well as the Board of Education. The West Side Cultural Center has been collaborating with the Board of Education in their AIDP Program to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public education.

By producing “Taste of Broadway,” the West Side Cultural Center is able to expose these at risk students to Broadway shows. There are thousands more students who can be saved from illiteracy if we can provide more programs. We are particularly concerned about funding for the existing program as well as expansion.

D. Goals and Objectives

The West Side Cultural Center is producing these programs in association with the New York City Board of Education. Together, with a coalition of key organizations which includes theater owners, union actors, community organizations, and press representatives, all work together for this common and most important goal of providing at risk students and student in temporary housing (as well as other deserving children) with professional Broadway entertainment. Our goals is to not only keep the “Taste of Broadway” going bi-annually, but to expand the program to accommodate a growing demand for quality programming.

Our objective is to make a positive impact on the huge literacy problem that exists, while providing extraordinary opportunities for exposure to the arts and theater, which would not be otherwise available to them.

The West Side Cultural Center is also helping young minority artists from disadvantaged neighborhoods by giving them the opportunity to perform in the show with the Broadway stars from several different current Broadway shows. This enables them to work with professionals in their field, giving them theatrical credits and teaching them practical skills in theater and performance.

E. Target Audience

“Taste of Broadway” serves 4,000 disadvantaged students in underserved schools annually. These students come from the five boroughs of New York City. Since we have started this program, we have served more than 20,000 students within the six years of production.

“Taste of Broadway” benefits these students by allowing them to see several professional performers from current Broadway shows at one time. Most of these children have never had the opportunity to see a live Broadway show. The other benefit is that the kids work harder in school to keep a high grade point average so they can return in the next semester to see the next “Taste of Broadway “ production. Their incentive is to keep a high grade point average!

F. Project Activities

The first activity for “Taste of Broadway” includes creating a Broadway showcase with professional talent, technicians and engineers needed to run the actual performance, all the equipment necessary for professional sound and lighting, and ushers to help seat the students. This also includes a full staff at the West Side Cultural Center raising necessary monies, grants and additional funding necessary to mount this huge undertaking of producing “Taste of Broadway.”

The second activity includes The Attention Incentive Drop Out Prevention Representative from all kinds of culturally diverse schools. We are bringing together children from different races and cultures, Children who are selected on the bases of academic achievements & improvement in attendants. They are gathered together to board school buses and journey to New York City’s Town Hall where they are seated for a live performance.

An up close & personal experience with the performers. Where they talk about their background and setup of the show there in. After the performance the students have the opportunity for a question and answer from the actors.

The fourth activity involves media interest in the production. Several news stations come and shoot footage for the nightly news or early morning magazines. Our involvement is creating a press conference, interviews backstage, or live shots of the production as it’s being performed. It is to our benefit to send out press releases to all the media so they can cover our event.

The fifth activity is gathering an entire warehouse of donated toys, books, CDs, and other holiday goodies to fill each goody bag with a nice array of gifts for each student who attends the “Taste of Broadway Holiday Celebration.”

G. Staff

Nanci Callahan - Producer

Traci Mann, Musical Director

Barry Kersch – Stage Manager

Julian Serrano – Production Manager

Joshua Rodriguez – Production Assistant

Marlene Martin - Publicity

David Kahn - Video Production

H. Measuring Project Results

We follow up with the Board of Education and the students. We need to know how we have done to increase the Grade Point Average for the Board of Education's Drop Out Incentive Program. We also like to receive letters from the students to see which one of the shows they favored and what they liked about the production. We received lots of letters in the past praising the program!

The West Side Cultural Center

Board of Directors

Richard Roemer, Chairman, Manhattan Entertainment Consultant

Diane Flagello, Manhattan School of Music, Director, Preparatory School

Linda Van Ness, President, Van Ness Communications

Ruth Laredo, International Concert Pianist

Nanci Callahan, Managing Director West Side Cultural Center