


## Chapter 27

# Bringing Arts Integration to Youth (BRAINY) at Colorado State University

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In this chapter, the authors demonstrate how a university Art Education program assists the university art museum and trains students to lead tours for BRAINY (BRinging Arts INtegration to Youth), the museum's educational program for Title I schools. The authors present how they guide student educators to develop tours for BRAINY by applying different interpretive strategies. The impacts that BRAINY creates for the visiting students and local communities include 1) the enhancement of civic engagement for young citizens, 2) high-quality art experiences for Title I schools, 3) the extended community program—Family Day. The impacts on student art educators are 1) knowing how to teach art in different learning contexts that are outside of the classroom, 2) applying the questioning strategies to their classroom teaching for probing art dialogues with students, 3) learning to be prepared but also flexible for unexpected situations. This chapter provides a practical and positive example to address a wonderful collaboration between an art museum, community members, and higher education.*

### **BRinging Arts INtegration to Youth (BRAINY) at Colorado State University**

*When our classes returned, our teachers immediately came to me to tell me that this was the best field trip they had ever experienced. They were especially pleased with the organization of the day and the ability of the presenters to adapt their content to the interest and skills of fourth grade students. The majority of students do not have the opportunity to experience art, music, theater and dance beyond their*

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*instruction at school. This field trip not only allowed them to expand their knowledge and experience with the arts, it gave them a chance to visit the University and get a glimpse of what higher education can be. Thank you so much for this phenomenal educational experience!*

The above quote, from an elementary school principal, highlights the importance and need for BRAINY (BRinging Arts INtegration to Youth). The program is a collaborative effort of the College of Liberal Arts at a Colorado State University (CSU), drawing on personnel and expertise from the Department of Art and Art History; School of Music, Theatre, and Dance; and organized by the university art museum, Gregory Allicar Museum of Art (GAMA). BRAINY provides integrated arts experiences (Marshall, 2019; Donahue & Stuart, 2010) for students from designated Title I schools in northern Colorado, defined by the federal government as schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet state academic standards (Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (Title I, Part A), U.S. Department of Education, 2018), through a full day of engaging learning activities in the University Center for the Arts; home to the GAMA. The BRAINY program is funded through Title I funds, which is the foundation grants and donations from alumni of the College of Liberal Arts. This support has been consisted over the years and allows the museum to provide BRAINY at no cost to participating schools.

BRAINY particularly provides a valuable opportunity for societal inclusion of Fort Collins considering this city's population demographic, which is 88.9% white and middle-class population (Quick Facts of the City, United States Census Bureau, 2020). The seven to eight Title I schools that attend BRAINY from the neighborhood school districts<sup>1</sup> indicate a Hispanic student population of 31% to 69%. It is always the museum's mission to invite people from different social status and racial populations in the city to enjoy the museum. BRAINY is one of the outreaches.

BRAINY sessions are taught by CSU faculty students under faculty guidance. CSU students' participation represents another powerful aspect of BRAINY. As part of CSU's commitment to experiential learning through community engagement, faculty members with expertise in arts education disciplines provide models for students, and the students have hands-on opportunities in teaching and leadership activities. GAMA is a small museum with a very small staff. An undertaking such as BRAINY would not be possible without the collaboration of faculty and students from the Department of Art and Art History and the School of Music, Theatre and Dance.

At the same time, the program offers invaluable service-learning and teaching experiences for CSU students through teaching methods classes in each of the participating arts disciplines. According to the post-surveys that the museum conducted for BRAINY from Fall 2015 to Spring 2019, the average of 58.5% student participants of the participating schools have never visited in an art museum before BRAINY. After participating in BRAINY, surveys found that an average of 87.1% of participating students would like to learn more about the arts, and almost 80% of students gave the highest score to their experiences of attending full BRAINY (Table 1). Obviously, BRAINY's success does not belong to one particular discipline but rather a collaborative contribution from all. However, the authors will focus on their efforts and observations in the visual art portion of the program in this chapter.

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