Arts and Academics Study Group

Huntsville Symphony Orchestra
P.O. Box 2400
Huntsville, AL 35804
Group 5 orchestra with $1.8m budget

Presenter: Susan Anderson ©, project chairman
2703 High Bunker Court SE
Hampton Cove, AL 35763
256-533-2935, chamaskas@comcast.net

Population of Huntsville, AL: 200,000 /MSA: 450,000

Arts and Academics Study Group (SG) – collaboration among stakeholders to increase attendance at Young People’s Concerts (YPC), especially of the three Madison County districts, by adding value through pedagogically age-appropriate programming, supported by correlating Alabama College and Career Ready standards and three years’ attendance and attending teachers survey data.

Timeline

Spring 2015
Brainstorming of Education ad hoc committee on increasing attendance at YPC.
Consulted State School Board of Education District representative on music’s role in fourth grade standards/curriculum; she suggested SG, name, focus, composition.
Produced overview document on the YPC and its associated components: Young Artist Audition, Art Contest, Student Program Booklet, and Pre-concert Visits by HSO professional musician with Guild volunteer. Emphasized student involvement and time required for concert and visit. Given to State School Board representative and the three superintendents.

Summer 2015
Superintendents designated educators to SG.
SG chairman recruited HSO Guild members from Education ad hoc committee, the Guild President and Education Chairman.
SG met 3 times at 2-week intervals at tech-rich meeting room provided by The Schools Foundation (TSF). Identified 30 correlating ACCR standards and composed 10-question Likert scale evaluation survey. Developed recommendations such as improving teacher contact timeline, audience participation, booklet contents, and Guild-HSO coordination. Recruited rising high school freshman to produce Prezi for presentation to school boards; HSO Marketing Director assisted by adding the music and polishing Prezi.

August /September 2015
Presented Prezi to each of 3 local school boards, HSO Trustees, and HSO Guild.

February 2016
Sent evaluation survey to all attending teachers on last day of Young People’s Concerts.
SG met to review survey results and determine content of report to school boards.
Compiled responses and attendance data and representative comments with separate reports for target school districts.
Survey results sent to each target district school board and superintendent.

Expenses
Survey Monkey membership for 2 months = $50, funded through HSO Guild budget.
Goals
Increasing attendance at YPC by adding pedagogical value.
Met by
Implemented SG save-the-date and registration emails timeline recommendations.
Distributed 30 correlating ACCR standards document to all invited teachers.
Guild Education Committee phoned schools that missed YPC reservation deadline.
Guild YPC committee added VIP contact position to invite and host elected officials.

Outcomes
YPC attendance increased 30% from previous year.
For target districts:
  Huntsville City Schools - more than 3 times the number of schools attended
  Madison City Schools – increased by 50%
  Madison County Schools – declined by 10%

Benefit to HSO
Increased fourth-grade YPC attendance.
Attention to YPC of school boards and other invited elected officials and of State School Board representative.
Serendipity: Initial conversations about SG led to HCS Magnet Director pursuing collaboration with the HSO in the reinstitution of the Lee HS orchestra magnet program. A factor in the City of Huntsville’s more than doubling its appropriation to HSO the following year.

Collaboration
HSO Guild; 3 local school districts-superintendents, boards, and educators; The Schools Foundation (TSF); the HSO.

Volunteers
Seven educators from three Madison County districts: 1 principal (of arts magnet school), 4 fourth-grade classroom teachers (2 from arts magnet school), 2 elementary music educators; the HSO Education Director; 9 Guild members: President, First Vice President, Education Committee chairman, YPC chairman and co-chairman, past President, past Education chairman, volunteer survey director, and SG chairman; TSF Executive director; 1 high school freshman.
Educators, Guild members, and HSO Education Director brainstormed ways to accomplish goals and developed the 10 post-YPC survey questions.
Educators researched and designated 30 ACCR correlating standards.
SG recruited student to produce Prezi; SG chairman supplied text.
HSO Education Director and SG chairman conferred with HSO CEO on HSO matters.
TSF Executive Director scheduled meeting space when requested by SG.
SG chairman, with SG members who could attend, presented SG Prezi to school boards, HSO Trustees, and HSO Guild. Presented appreciation token to State School Board member at Huntsville City board presentation.

What would I change?
Other than consulting educators years earlier, nothing. Key to success: educators on the SG! They gave their time (at least 24 hours each) pro bono during summer vacation and afternoons during school term.