



WEST SIDE STORY PROJECT

Crime prevention on a new stage.

TOOLKIT



WEST SIDE STORY[®] PROJECT

The **West Side Story Project** (WSSP) is a collaboration between police, theatre, and schools that uses the themes of *West Side Story* to address youth violence, youth-police relations, and cultural differences. This project demonstrates how these groups can use theatre arts to reduce youth conflicts (both internal and external) and build relationships.

The **West Side Story Project Toolkit** is a set of 5 booklets, a CD and a DVD that provides directions, suggestions, and examples for building an innovative collaboration between law enforcement, the theatre, schools, and community organizations to develop a youth violence prevention initiative using the timeless musical *West Side Story*.

BOOK 1 “PROGRAM OVERVIEW” provides a summary of the West Side Story Project (WSSP) and its value for law enforcement agencies and theatre organizations.

BOOK 2 “PARTNERS & RESOURCES” gives suggestions for finding partners and resources for the project as well as ways to measure outcomes of the project.

BOOK 3 “PLANNING THE YOUTH SUMMIT” describes how to plan a series of workshops based around scenes from *West Side Story*.

BOOK 4 “PLANNING THE ARTISTIC PERFORMANCE” describes how to prepare for a performance of original works by youth based on themes from *West Side Story*.

BOOK 5 “PLANNING THE COMMUNITY FORUM” explains how to organize a community forum to discuss youth violence prevention.

The **West Side Story Project** can be replicated in part or in its entirety, depending on the interests, needs, and resources of each jurisdiction. The **DVD** includes 60 minutes of interviews from the law enforcement, theatre, and community perspectives. The **CD** includes a sample press release, an article on the WSSP, and forms that are ready to edit, print, and use. This toolkit is designed as a series of booklets that contain tools to build each of the major activities of the WSSP. You may use one booklet, or you may use them all.



BOOK 1



WEST SIDE STORY HELP PROJECT

PROGRAM OVERVIEW



West Side Story Project Toolkit: Crime Prevention on a New Stage

Produced By: U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

Authors: Pamela Beal, Ph.D. and Liza Comtois

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From the Director

Dear Colleague,

The U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and the Seattle Police Foundation are pleased to announce the publication of the ***West Side Story Project Toolkit***—a resource that provides an opportunity for law enforcement to partner with local theatre, schools, youth-based organizations, and community groups to develop new approaches to gang prevention, youth-police relations, and cultural conflict.

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s 2008 National Youth Gang Survey, 32.4 percent of all cities, suburban areas, towns, and rural counties experienced gang problems in 2008. This report also states that approximately 774,000 gang members and 27,900 gangs were active in the United States, demonstrating that many communities across America are plagued with the threat of gangs. The ***West Side Story Project Toolkit*** allows students from diverse ethnic and minority communities to participate in activities designed to engage youth and law enforcement in dialogues about gangs, youth violence prevention, youth-police relationships, immigration, and racial/ethnic relations. It also creates the possibility for a public forum to discuss a local community’s efforts to reduce youth violence and address the role of its juvenile justice system.

The purpose of this Toolkit is to demonstrate how police, theatre, youth organizations, and others can work together to use creative strategies to reduce conflict, solve problems, and build relationships.

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (the COPS Office) understands the importance of forging relationships between law enforcement and the community. These relationships contribute to the concept of “building communities of trust” and a sense of shared purpose. We hope you will find this publication helpful in “building relationships and solving problems,” two core focuses of community policing. We encourage you to share this publication, as well as your successes, with others.

Sincerely,



Bernard Melekian
Director



Acknowledgments

Many organizations and individuals worked together to make the original West Side Story Project happen in Seattle in 2007: the Seattle Police Department, the Seattle Police Foundation, the 5th Avenue Theatre, King County Parks and Recreation, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Seattle Public Schools, the Seattle Channel, Town Hall Seattle and the Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center. Special thanks to Anna Laszlo who imagined this project and worked to make it happen, and to former SPD Chief Gil Kerlikowske and SPD Chief John Diaz for their support of the project. Also, thanks to Liza Comtois, Detective Kim Bogucki, Officer Adrian Diaz, Carmen Martinez, and the WSSP Teen Advisory Council who worked with Anna to plan the project.

Many thanks to the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services for providing the funding for the West Side Story Project Toolkit, especially Sandra Webb, Ph.D., Katherine McQuay and Tawana Waugh. Thanks also to the members of the West Side Story Project Advisory Board for its work in assisting with the Toolkit: Anna Laszlo (Circle Solutions, Inc.), SPD Deputy Chief Clark Kimerer, SPF Executive Director Renee Hopkins, 5th Avenue Producing Artistic Director David Armstrong, 5th Avenue Education Programs Manager Anya Rudnick, WSSP Coordinator Liza Comtois, SPD Detective Kim Bogucki, SPD Officer Adrian Diaz, Carmen Martinez of Seattle Parks and Recreation, and Seattle youth Colin Hartman and Roxie Torres. Thanks also to those that replicated the WSSP and provided feedback on the Toolkit in White Plains, New York, in 2008: Former Commissioner Frank Straub, Assistant Chief Anne Fitzsimmons, and officers of the White Plains Police Department, Linda Puoplo and Catherine Backes of the White Plains Youth Bureau, Teaching Artist Toni Rubio, and the Mayor's Youth Council of White Plains; and in Los Angeles, California, in 2009: Senior Lead Officer Larry Martinez, and officers of the Los Angeles Police Department Foothill Division, and Elizabeth Salazar, Oren Siegel, Stephanie Fabia, and Jennifer McKinney of Phoenix House in Lake View Terrace. Thanks also to Jamie Bernstein and the Leonard Bernstein Office, Inc for their support for this project.

My special thanks to Shanna Christie, SPD Graphic Designer, for her work on the Toolkit and to Cesar Hidalgo-Landeros, SPD Video Unit, for his many hours of work on the Toolkit DVD. And finally, my thanks to Toolkit coauthor, Liza Comtois.

Pamela Beal, Ph.D., Project Director
West Side Story Project Toolkit



Toolkit Introduction

The West Side Story Project Toolkit is a set of 5 booklets and an accompanying CD and DVD providing directions, suggestions and examples for building an innovative collaboration between law enforcement and the theater to work with schools and community organizations to develop a youth violence prevention initiative using the timeless musical *West Side Story*. The toolkit was funded by the United States Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) to provide a guide for other jurisdictions interested in replicating the West Side Story Project (WSSP) that was conceived and implemented in Seattle, Washington.

BOOK 1 “PROGRAM OVERVIEW” provides a summary of the West Side Story Project (WSSP) and its value for law enforcement agencies and theatre organizations.

BOOK 2 “PARTNERS & RESOURCES” gives suggestions for finding partners and resources for the project as well as ways to measure outcomes of the project.


BOOK 3 “PLANNING THE YOUTH SUMMIT” describes how to plan a series of workshops based around scenes from *West Side Story*.

BOOK 4 “PLANNING THE ARTISTIC PERFORMANCE” describes how to prepare for a performance of original works by youth based on themes from *West Side Story*.

BOOK 5 “PLANNING THE COMMUNITY FORUM” explains how to organize a community forum to discuss youth violence prevention.

THE DATA CD includes Books 1–5, forms and contracts that you can edit, print, and use, a sample press release and an article on Seattle’s West Side Story Project.

THE DVD (60 MINUTES) contains interviews with law enforcement managers and officers, theater staff and teaching artists, students, and community leaders who participated in the original WSSP in Seattle, Washington (2007), as well as those who participated in replications of the project in White Plains, New York (2008) and in Los Angeles, California (2009). It also features an interview with Jamie Bernstein, daughter of *West Side Story* composer Leonard Bernstein, and excerpts from the Seattle Town Hall Youth Violence Forum.



The WSSP can be replicated in part or in its entirety, depending on the interests, needs and resources of each jurisdiction. Some locations may only replicate one part of the project, such as the summit or the community forum. Others may decide to reproduce all parts of the WSSP. The toolkit is designed as a series of booklets that contain tools to build each of the major activities of the WSSP. You may use one booklet, or you may use them all.

A Unique Approach to Youth and Gang Violence Prevention

“A profound opportunity to connect with youth in ways that we usually can’t.” – Deputy Chief Clark Kimerer, Seattle Police Department

COPS: Supporting Creativity and Unusual Partnerships to Reach Youth

Developing and implementing a youth violence prevention effort requires both the creativity to design interventions that “speak” to youth in their language and circumstance, as well as the wisdom to engage a wide range of community agencies and resources that interface with youth. Law enforcement agencies, implementing the tenets of community policing, have partnered with schools, parent groups, athletic organizations, Boys & Girls Clubs, and churches, for example, in efforts to reach and educate youth through early gang prevention efforts.

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (the COPS Office) has supported these programmatic efforts by fostering collaborative partnerships between law enforcement agencies and schools, as well as developing technical assistance materials to encourage the application of problem-solving principles to address both school-based and gang-related problems. By fostering these collaborative partnerships, the COPS Office has encouraged law enforcement agencies to look beyond their “traditional” community partners to forge collaborations that will uniquely allow law enforcement (and their collaborative partners) to design tailored responses to community crime and disorder problems—a principle tenant of community policing.¹

1. For example, since 1999, COPS has funded the COPS in Schools Program that provides resources to local law enforcement agencies to deploy school resource officers in schools. COPS has also developed a series of Problem-Oriented Guides for Police (POP Guides) to encourage the use of the SARA problem-solving process and developed the Collaboration Toolkit: How to Build, Fix and Sustain Effective Law Enforcement-Community Partnerships. COPS has also compiled a comprehensive CD-ROM addressing gang-related programs and strategies. See www.cops.usdoj.gov.



The West Side Story Project Collaborative Partners

Law enforcement agencies are always seeking new ways to reach youth and prevent youth violence. In 2007, the Seattle Police Department (SPD), the Seattle Police Foundation (SPF), and Seattle's 5th Avenue Theatre developed a unique collaboration to create the West Side Story Project (WSSP). This project is an opportunity for law enforcement agencies to partner with a nontraditional partner such as a local theater company in cooperation with more traditional partners such as schools and/or community-based organizations to develop new approaches to gang prevention, youth-police relations, and cultural conflict. Most community theaters and nonprofit professional theaters have educational outreach programs with missions that suit such a project and complement the ongoing efforts of today's law enforcement agencies to find new ways to engage youth and prevent youth-related crime.

Why Use West Side Story?

Background: *West Side Story*

By far the most popular contemporary version of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, a tragic story of feuding families and star-crossed lovers, is the 1957 musical drama *West Side Story*. Set in the slums of New York City, *West Side Story* revisits the rivalry between the Capulets and the Montagues in a clash between the Jets, a Polish-American gang, and the Sharks, an immigrant Puerto Rican gang. The Jets see the Sharks as a threat to their dominance, and the Sharks, new to the neighborhood, are ready to defend their new territory and establish themselves in their American home. The tension builds as the gangs vie for control of the neighborhood. When the Jets' former leader Tony (*West Side Story*'s Romeo) and Maria (sister of Shark member Bernardo and the musical's Juliet) fall in love, the opposing gangs' tensions boil over into violence. The warring between the Jets and the Sharks ultimately leads to the death of Bernardo and Tony, leaving Maria brokenhearted and the gang members with nothing but sorrow and loss.

The same societal issues central to *Romeo and Juliet*—prejudice, hatred, and struggles for power that erupt into violence and culminate in death—are re-explored in this still modern musical drama of youth gang wars. The West Side Story Project Toolkit is designed to help build new partnerships that employ theater and the arts to address some of today's pressing issues such as youth violence, bullying, gangs, interracial tensions, and cultural conflict.

***West Side Story* and Its Relevance for Today**

Marking its 50th anniversary in 2007, *West Side Story* provides the backdrop to an exploration of youth gangs, youth-police relationships, prejudice and the romance of two young people caught in a violent cross-cultural struggle. The electrifying music of Leonard Bernstein and the prophetic lyrics of Stephen Sondheim hauntingly paint a picture as relevant today as it was more than 50 years ago. The themes and scenes of this quintessential story can serve as the catalyst for a series of community dialogs for youth and adult audiences about gang involvement and violence (“The Jet Song”), violence prevention (“Cool”), race, immigration, and discrimination (“America” and “A Boy Like That”) and youth-police relations (“Gee, Officer Krupke,” “Snowing the Cops”).²



The Seattle 5th Avenue Theatre's production of *West Side Story* marked the timeless musical's 50th anniversary and sparked the unique partnership between theater and police that created the West Side Story Project.

2. For a recent study of immigrant families in New York City that contributes to the understanding of the link between immigration, disenfranchised youth, and the lure of gang life, see Mateu-Gelabert, Pedro, *Dreams, Gangs, and Guns: The Interplay Between Adolescent Violence and Immigration in a New York City Neighborhood*, New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2002.



Overview of the West Side Story Project

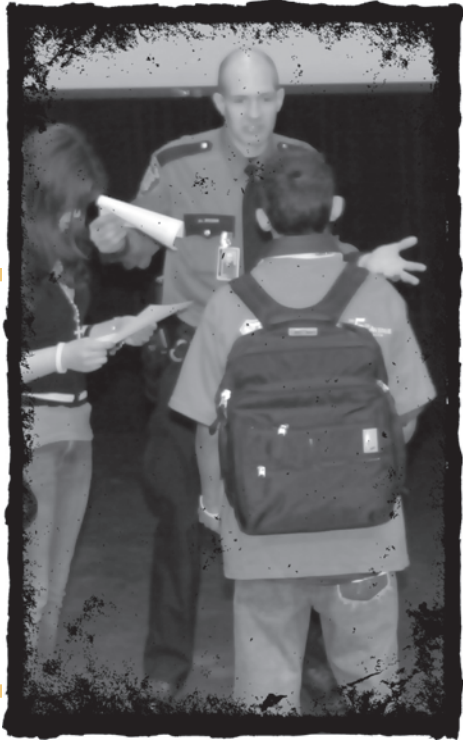


HEAR “PARTNERS & PARTICIPANTS” IN THE SEATTLE WSSP TALK ABOUT THE GENESIS AND IMPACT OF THE PROJECT IN “OVERVIEW OF THE WSSP” ON THE ACCOMPANYING DVD.

The project provides an opportunity for middle and high school students to participate in activities designed to engage youth and members of law enforcement agencies in dialogs about gang and youth violence prevention, youth–police relationships, and immigration and racial/ethnic relations. Simultaneously, it introduces youth, particularly those considered at-risk, to a world far away from their everyday lives—the experience of live musical theatre and the opportunity to create their own art and drama based on themes from *West Side Story* while working with professional actors and teaching artists.

The project also provides an opportunity for a public forum (See Book 5 “Planning the Community Forum”) based on the themes of “Gee, Officer Krupke,” on issues of risk and resiliency among at-risk youth, juvenile justice reform, issues facing new immigrants and their relationships with police, and local community efforts to address youth and gang violence. The four specific goals of the toolkit are:

1. To use theater and drama to start dialogs between youth and law enforcement officers about youth and gang violence and youth/police relationships.
2. To use theater and drama to give youth tools to deal with their own internal conflicts and conflicts with others.
3. To engage interested youth in producing, with the assistance teaching artists, their own art and drama based on themes of *West Side Story*.
4. To engage the adult community in a dialog about youth violence, gangs, and strategies to address system-wide responses to at-risk youth.



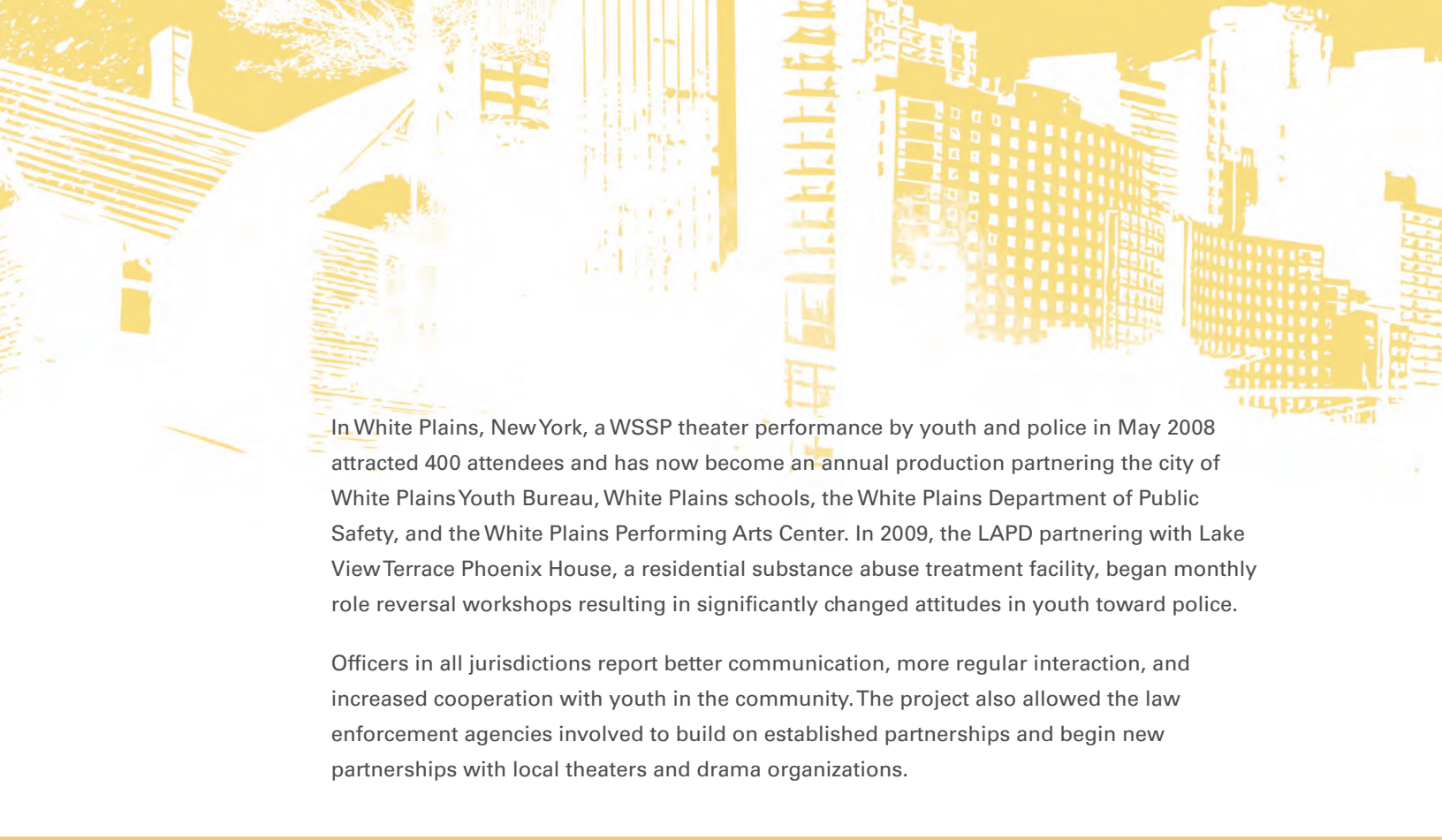
Seattle's WSSP Youth Summit: "Snowing the Cops" role reversal workshop.

Resources Needed

While Seattle's project was, in part, funded by the Seattle Police Foundation, (costs for the youth summits and for teaching artists), many of the costs associated with the project were donated by the partner organizations (such as labor for planning and staffing the events) and by local sponsors (e.g., printed material). Like any community policing outreach effort, this project does require time and commitment of police officers over several months, and the commitment of the leadership of the partner organizations is key to the success of the project. See Book 2 "Partners & Resources."

Program Results

Two hundred students completed evaluations of the Seattle WSSP summits, consistently reporting significantly improved perceptions of the SPD officers as a result of participating in this project. They spoke of "seeing police officers as people who want the best for youth" or "seeing that officers are there to help youth prevent problems" and "learning more about gang prevention and how SPD officers can help them stay out of gangs."



In White Plains, New York, a WSSP theater performance by youth and police in May 2008 attracted 400 attendees and has now become an annual production partnering the city of White Plains Youth Bureau, White Plains schools, the White Plains Department of Public Safety, and the White Plains Performing Arts Center. In 2009, the LAPD partnering with Lake View Terrace Phoenix House, a residential substance abuse treatment facility, began monthly role reversal workshops resulting in significantly changed attitudes in youth toward police.

Officers in all jurisdictions report better communication, more regular interaction, and increased cooperation with youth in the community. The project also allowed the law enforcement agencies involved to build on established partnerships and begin new partnerships with local theaters and drama organizations.

Possible Events for the WSSP:

- **Summit:** An all-day “youth summit” partnering law enforcement officers, student facilitators, and teaching artists in a series of workshops about gangs, violence, cultural conflict, and youth-police relationships based on scenes from *West Side Story* (See Book 3 “Planning the Youth Summit”).
- **Performance:** With the help of teaching artists, youth develop and present their own performances based on themes from *West Side Story* and *Romeo and Juliet* (See Book 4 “Planning the Artistic Performance”).
- **Community Forum:** An adult community forum to explore the public policy issues inherent in the lyrics of “Gee, Officer Krupke” with a facilitated panel discussion of youth and gang violence and the juvenile justice system (See Book 5 “Planning the Youth Community Forum”).

The Power of West Side Story for Youth Violence Prevention

In 1955, Arthur Laurents, the author of *West Side Story*, observed that “it is ironic that a national misfortune (the rise of juvenile gangs) should benefit a project for the theater. It might seem odd to consider juvenile gang wars as the right background for a musical, but never had we thought of this show in terms of an ordinary musical.” No “ordinary musical” indeed! What the creative team of *West Side Story* could not have imagined is how this less-than-ordinary musical could be the catalyst for a series of workshops and dialogs about youth-police relationships, cultural differences, youth violence, and improving support systems for youth.

Issues the West Side Story Project Can Address

Youth-Police Relations

West Side Story is about the lack of trust that often exists between police and youth.

“Snowing the Cops”: A role reversal workshop based on this scene allows youth to play police officers and police to play teenagers. In their evaluations of the workshop, Seattle youth reported that it gave them a much better understanding of the world from a police officer’s perspective.

Cultural Differences

West Side Story is about the inability to see the world from another’s perspective, resulting in prejudice, fear of the unfamiliar, and conflict with those unlike ourselves.

“America”: In a workshop based on this scene, youth in White Plains, New York, used a theater game called “Gibberish Land” to show how difficult it is for new immigrants who are unable to speak the language in a new country. In the “America” workshop in Seattle, theatre games were used to show youth how much in common we actually have with each other. As one student wrote, “People were open with their lives and experiences. I learned not to judge people by the way they look.”



Seattle 5th Avenue Theatre Production of *West Side Story*: The Jets versus the Sharks.



SEE “YOUTH PERSPECTIVE” ON THE ACCOMPANYING DVD FOR INTERVIEWS WITH YOUTH WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE WSSP ON THE VALUE OF USING THEATRE IN CHANGING THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON POLICE AND DEVELOPING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THOSE DIFFERENT FROM THEMSELVES.

The Danger of Gangs

West Side Story is also about the attraction and danger of gangs.

“Jet Song”: In this workshop, youth can hear from police officers and former gang members about myths and realities of gangs. In surveys completed after the Seattle workshop, youth reported the following lessons learned:

- If anyone tries to force me to join a gang, I can talk to people about this problem.
- I learned to make good choices, be more careful in what I do, and be more responsible.
- I learned a lot more about gangs and how it would be better not to be involved in them.
- I learned to think hard about the actions you take and what the results will be.

Detailed guides for the summit workshops “Snowing the Cops,” “America,” and “Jet Song” can be found in Book 3 “Planning the Youth Summit.”

Youth Violence

West Side Story also addresses how easily fear and anger can erupt into violence.

Theater Games and Artistic Performance: The WSSP gives youth a chance to turn their conflicts into art and even laughter as they develop and perform original works based on themes from *West Side Story* and the Shakespeare play on which it was based, *Romeo and Juliet*.

- In Seattle, using a dramatic method called Replay Theatre that employs the ancient idea of the narrator and Greek Chorus, youth turned their own personal stories of conflict with others into plays.
- In White Plains, New York, youth were taught stage fighting to turn conflict into dance in a re-creation of the opening scene of *Romeo and Juliet*.



For a guide to creating a WSSP performance, see Book 4 “Planning the Artistic Performance.”



SEE “PLANNING THE ARTISTIC PERFORMANCE” ON THE ACCOMPANYING DVD FOR AN INTERVIEW WITH A TEACHING ARTIST ABOUT TECHNIQUES TO DEVELOP ORIGINAL WORKS BASED ON THEMES FROM *WEST SIDE STORY* AND *ROMEO AND JULIET*.

Support Systems for Youth

West Side Story is also a critique of the juvenile justice and the support systems that sometimes fail our youth. The surprisingly cynical lyrics of “Gee, Officer Krupke” can serve as a starting point for a community forum on youth violence prevention and ways to support systems for youth.

For a guide to organizing a community forum, see Book 5 “Planning the Community Forum.”



SEE “SEATTLE TOWN HALL: YOUTH VIOLENCE FORUM” FOR EXCERPTS FROM THE SEATTLE FORUM INCLUDING A PANEL DISCUSSION ON GANGS AND WHY YOUTH TURN TO THEM.



Research on Arts and Prevention

Recent research has shown links between the performing arts and improved cognition, including the following substantiated observations:

1. An interest in a performing art leads to a high state of motivation that produces the sustained attention necessary to improve performance and the training of attention that leads to improvement in other domains of cognition.
2. Correlations exist between music training and both reading acquisition and sequence learning. One of the central predictors of early literacy, phonological awareness, is correlated with both music training and the development of a specific brain pathway.
3. Training in acting appears to lead to memory improvement through the learning of general skills for manipulating semantic information.
4. Learning to dance by effective observation is closely related to learning by physical practice, both in the level of achievement and also the neural substrates that support the organization of complex actions. Effective observational learning may transfer to other cognitive skills.³

More Readings on Arts and Prevention

For additional resources on the use of arts for youth violence prevention and conflict resolution see:

- Americans for the Arts (www.americansforthearts.org). Search their database for keywords “at-risk youth,” “prevention,” and “crime and justice.” They have an excellent online downloadable YouthARTS Toolkit as well as instructional videos. They also have a publication designed for developing an arts program in a community setting: *Artists in the Community: Training Artists to Work in Alternative Settings*.
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org). Search for publications on the topic of delinquency prevention and subtopic of youth involvement. In particular, see the *Arts and Performances for Prevention in their Youth in Action series*.

3. Gazzaniga, M. S., “Arts and Cognition: Findings hint at relationships.” Learning, Arts, and the Brain – The Dana Consortium Report on Arts and Cognition, New York/Washington, D.C.: Dana Press, March 2008.

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"This is an opportunity to talk about very difficult issues in a very safe environment. . . . We get to talk about race, we get to talk about diversity, we get to talk about youth violence, we get to talk about how our conduct as police officers affects the community and to learn from the community how we can do things differently."

– Frank Straub, Former Public Safety Commissioner, White Plains, New York



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PARTNERS & RESOURCES



West Side Story Project Toolkit: Crime Prevention on a New Stage

Produced By: U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

Authors: Pamela Beal, Ph.D. and Liza Comtois

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A New Kind of Partnership

Partnering for Youth Violence Prevention


Local law enforcement, schools, and social services agencies have partnered to create an array of programs to educate youth about the dangers of gang involvement and the strategies to resist gangs and violence: engaging youth in after-school activities, mentoring and counseling programs, and academic tutoring and job skills training. These initiatives, while not appropriate for “hard-core” gang members, have been designed with an understanding that reaching the gang “wanna-bes” or other youth who are surrounded by gangs in their neighborhoods may be the most powerful investment to reduce future gang involvement and violence.

Partnering with the Theater

The West Side Story Project (WSSP) is another such effort targeted at youth on the edges of the culture of gangs and violence, but brings an unusual new partner to law enforcement: the theater. In the WSSP, unlikely partners join forces to address one of the most tragic afflictions of today’s youth culture—youth-on-youth violence at younger and younger ages. With this approach, the theater becomes a non-traditional messenger for community policing. Law enforcement advocates for the power of theater.

Partnering with the Schools and Teachers

The West Side Story Project can either be replicated in a school setting as a companion piece to a production of *West Side Story*, or by individual teachers in the classroom. For instance, a social studies or history teacher can show *West Side Story* and use selected scenes and lyrics from songs such as “America” or “A Boy Like That” to develop lesson plans around such issues as the history of immigration to America and the cultural conflicts that have resulted. A drama teacher could collaborate with a history, social studies, or English teacher to use theater games and interactive dramas based on the workshops in the Toolkit to begin discussions about conflict between cultures, immigration, youth violence, or conflict with authority or with those whose perspectives differ. Or using “Snowing the Cops” and “Gee, Officer Krupke,” school resource officers could be asked to participate in a role reversal workshop to help youth and police better understand each other.



As an example, a teacher at Seattle's Roosevelt High School, one of the schools participating in the Seattle WSSP, used the WSSP to augment her course on cultural conflict. As one of her students remarked,


"A class I took my senior year of high school used the West Side Story Project to help students at my school learn about the issues like gang violence and segregation found in many other schools around the city, but rarely felt at mine. Most of the students in my classroom were middle-class white kids who had no relation to gangs or any victims of gang violence and had rarely, if ever, felt any sort of discrimination. Using the *West Side Story* film and speaking with students from other, more diverse schools around the city helped my classmates learn about issues that were close to our homes but many of us never knew existed. The West Side Story Project opened up opportunities for honest conversations and a place where my classmates and I felt free to talk about social issues we considered important."

Bringing in police officers for the role reversal workshops can result in especially powerful experiences for both youth and police. Lorraine Trovato-Cantori, an art teacher at an alternative high school in White Plains, NY, who worked on their WSSP says,

"I loved working with the police and saw the power of the role reversals where the police played youth and youth played police, giving youth a perspective on police as human beings. The only obstacle we had was removing the pre-conception the students had that this would be just another workshop. It wasn't just another workshop: it was unlike anything else they'd ever done and they responded with enthusiasm."

"I would recommend the WSSP to other teachers and schools, because our youth today are instrumental in helping to develop cultural understanding and the WSSP promotes a positive understanding of cultural differences. I highly recommend that teachers bring students aboard who are at-risk, youth who are associated with gangs, and introverted youth. We brought such youths to the WSSP and they are now sharing the lessons they learned with others."

-Lorraine Travato-Cantori



These are only a few of the possible uses of the timeless themes of *West Side Story* within a classroom setting. Certainly if a school is doing a production of *West Side Story*, any one or more of the components of the Toolkit—the summit workshops, the forum, or even a companion performance of original works by youth based on themes of the film—could enhance students’ experience of the play as a school-based West Side Story Project and could be done on a small budget. Partnering with local police, a local community theater, or even a local youth bureau or organization can bring more resources to a school-based WSSP. For teachers interested in learning more about using the arts to teach other subjects, see the Leonard Bernstein Center for Artful Learning at www.artfullearning.com.

Using the Arts to Resolve Conflict

This project is built on the idea that the arts, in particular kinetic arts such as drama, music, and dance, can give youth a means to work out their negative feelings in a safe manner. Drama, music, and other art forms can often reach youth and help them to resolve internal and external conflicts when other approaches, such as punishment or threat, cannot. Jamie Bernstein, daughter of *West Side Story* composer Leonard Bernstein, believes that “the arts can be used to teach so much more than the art itself: It is really the most creative and communicative tool that a teacher can have.”¹

Pooling Resources for a Common Vision

These unlikely, and certainly “nontraditional” partners share a common vision—musical theater, partnered with law enforcement. Such a combination can be a powerful instrument to educate youth and adults and to explore the societal systems that can be mobilized to reduce youth violence and develop mutual respect between youth and law enforcement officers. When the Seattle Police Department (SPD), the Seattle 5th Avenue Theatre, and the Seattle Police Foundation (SPF) forged their collaboration, they combined their individual resources to leverage other community agencies, local sponsors, and the media to support a series of citywide programs focusing on youth violence prevention. These other partners included the King County Boys & Girls Clubs, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Seattle Neighborhood Group, Town Hall Seattle, the Seattle Channel (public access channel), Allstate Insurance, Seattle Public Schools, and the Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center. All partners contributed in-kind and/or financially to ensure the successful implementation of the project.

1. All quotations are from an interview with Jamie Bernstein on May 20, 2008 in New York City by Pamela Beal, Ph.D. For information on the Leonard Bernstein Center for Learning, go to www.artfullearning.com.

Benefits of Collaboration

Interviews held with participants in the Seattle, Washington, White Plains, New York and Los Angeles, California projects yielded numerous benefits for youth, law enforcement, and the theater, including better cooperation for police with youth on the street, community-wide recognition of a theater's commitment to education, and better understanding for youth of why police officers act as they do in an encounter.



SEE THE ACCOMPANYING DVD FOR INTERVIEWS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGERS, OFFICERS, YOUTH, THEATER STAFF, AND COMMUNITY LEADERS ON ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF THE WSSP.



Molly Fortin and Liza Comtois of 5th Avenue Theatre, Detective Kim Bogucki of the Seattle Police Department, and Carmen Martinez of Seattle Parks and Recreation joined forces to create the West Side Story Project.



Benefits to Youth Who Participated in the WSSP

Allows students to meet other youth from different schools.

“Microsoft kids go to my school. Meeting kids from Chief Sealth whose experiences were so different from mine was eye opening. I had no idea about gangs.”

Encourages youth to build relationships with the police.

“Making a positive connection to the police was great. I was terrified of cops! Most of my friends felt the same way. I had no interaction with cops before and no reason to fear them, but I did.”

Encourages youth to help others stay out of gangs.

“My cousins used to be in gangs and it didn’t really help their life. I thought if I join in the West Side Story Project I might really help others.”

Breaks down barriers and prejudices between groups.

“At the summit, the Youth Advisory Council decided to mix things up at lunch and so even though we were from different schools and different groups we sat together. Some stragglers from different schools started sitting together after seeing us change, realizing that it really was okay to mix. Seeing that small change in what we were before the program (a group of strangers afraid to mingle) and what we became showed me that the goal of awareness really did work.”

Benefits to Law Enforcement Agencies

Improves youth–police trust and communication and provides an opportunity to see things from each other’s perspective.

“In the beginning it was an icy atmosphere...but by the end it was a total 180.”

– Senior Lead Officer John Walker, LAPD

Highlights the positive, preventative work law enforcement does and attracts media attention.

“The WSSP gave the Seattle Police Department the opportunity to showcase its commitment to violence prevention.”

– Sgt. Sean Whitcomb, SPD Media Unit



Provides a forum to discuss police–community issues in a safe environment.

“We get to talk about race, we get to talk about diversity, we get to talk about youth violence...and to learn from the community how to do things differently.”

– Former Commissioner Frank Straub, White Plains, New York Public Safety

Gives law enforcement officers the opportunity to educate youth about laws that affect young people.

“I got a better understanding of situations I may encounter and how the police will deal with them so I know how to act.”

– Student at Seattle Youth Summit

Benefits to the Theater

- Showcases the educational outreach mission of the theater to the community
- Provides an opportunity for community-wide forums inspired by musical theater
- Educates nontraditional theater audiences, particularly young people, about theater
- Brings new partners to the theater
- Shows the value of theater for helping to focus the creative energies of at-risk youth
- In Seattle, provided unusual interaction for the cast of *West Side Story* with youth, police, and even former gang members inspiring their roles in the 5th Avenue Theatre production

“The West Side Story Project provided an opportunity for community discussion of crucial issues through the vehicle of musical theater.”

– Bill Berry, Seattle 5th Avenue Theatre Associate Artistic Director

“Any regional theater that has an educational outreach program could stand to benefit by partnering with their local police department and using West Side Story as a way to generate discussion and participation with youth in their city.”

–Jamie Bernstein



Jamie Bernstein Encourages Local Theaters to Partner With Their Local Police:

“The really great thing that happened in Seattle was that the theater company—which had its own educational outreach program—discovered that the police department—which had its own educational outreach program—was really trying to do the same thing. So when they put their resources together they had a double strength means of reaching out to the youth in the city and they got exponentially more results for their efforts.”

Identifying Partners

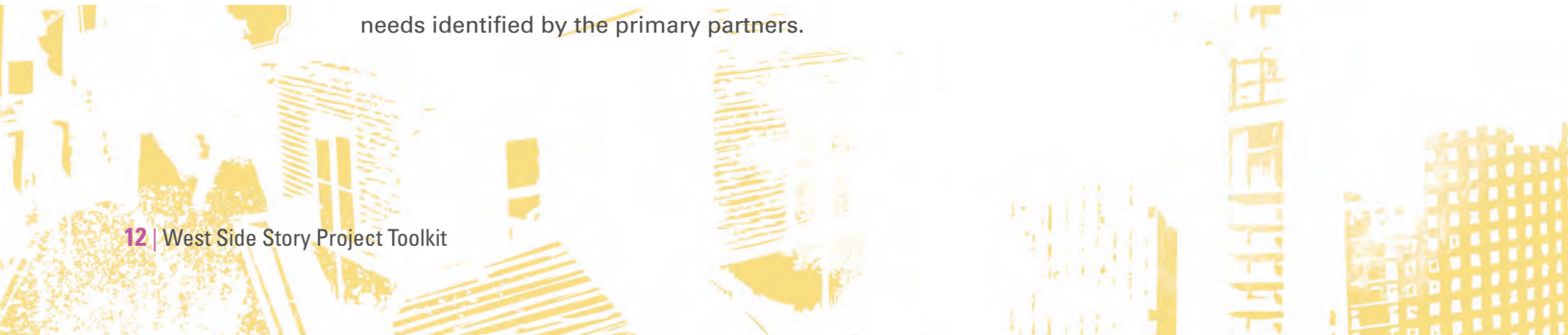
Finding the right primary partners who will form the core team to plan the project and identifying other supporting stakeholders is key to the success of the project. Below are examples of what Seattle, Washington, did to develop its partnerships.


Theater. The Seattle partnership started in 2007 with a Seattle 5th Avenue Theatre Board member approaching the artistic director with the idea of a partnership with the police in light of the theater’s production of the musical in its 50th anniversary year. The artistic director saw the potential of the partnership in supporting their educational outreach mission.

Law Enforcement. The Seattle Police Department (SPD) was open to new ideas for partnering with the community on public safety matters, and since the musical addresses the problem of youth violence and youth–police relations, the police saw the potential, too.

Schools. SPD officers and the theater’s educational outreach liaison went together to talk to principals and teachers in schools that had drama programs as well as in schools located in areas that had gangs. The police and the theater’s liaison used established connections in the schools to begin the discussions. Four high schools were selected to partner on the project: two with strong drama programs and two with significant populations of at-risk youth.

Sponsors. The partners then applied for and received a grant from the Seattle Police Foundation for the project (see budget below). They also jointly solicited and were awarded a grant from one of the area’s arts foundations. Other sponsors were sought according to the needs identified by the primary partners.





For additional resources on developing partnerships and identifying stakeholders, see the [COPS Collaboration Toolkit: How to Build, Fix and Sustain Effective Law Enforcement-Community Partnerships](#).²

Talking Points for Partners

When putting together your principle partners, consider the following suggestions as possible talking points.


Theater Partners: If you are looking for a *Theater* partner, consider the following:

- Most community and nonprofit theaters have an educational outreach program that would fit well with the WSSP. Ask to speak to the educational outreach liaison/manager.
- Frame the project as way to build youth interest in theater, to expand the theater’s partners’, and to showcase their outreach program.
- Determine if the theater already has a partnership with a local school.
- Offer to contact arts funders in the area with the theater to submit a joint application for funding the project.
- Ask the theater to provide backstage tours for students who become involved with planning the project and discount theater tickets for students who participate in the project.



DVD: CONSIDER SHOWING “OVERVIEW,” “JAMIE BERNSTEIN,” AND “THEATRE PERSPECTIVE.”

2. Rinehart, Tammy, Anna Laszlo, and Gwen Briscoe. *COPS Collaboration Toolkit: How to Build, Fix and Sustain Effective Law Enforcement-Community Partnerships*. Washington, D.C. U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2001.



Law Enforcement Partners: If you are looking for a *Law Enforcement* partner, consider the following:

- Reach out to established connections within the department.
- Ask to speak with the community police officers, the community outreach unit, gang unit officers, officers involved with a Police Athletic League (PAL) or other youth-related activities.
- Ask supervisors to involve officers with good community speaking skills and officers who like “outside of the box” work.
- Frame the WSSP as a youth violence prevention project, suitable for at-risk youth but not an intervention for hard-core gang members.
- Highlight the benefits for police departments, especially in establishing communication with youth and improving youth–police relations. While it might seem a “warm-fuzzy” project, the goal is to build communication and trust with at-risk youth.
- Emphasize that this is an interactive project, not a lecture, and that youth learn without even realizing it! It is an excellent vehicle for educating youth about the law and about the perspective of police officers.
- Offer a passive role such as a group guide for the day for officers who are nervous or unwilling to act in the role reversal workshop. Even in Seattle some officers came into the project a little reluctantly but by the end saw the value in the project and had fun with the youth.
- Consider the issue of overtime for police departments and try to work the project into a schedule that will not require it. In previous projects, the police donated their time and labor.
- If the police department has a foundation, consider applying to the foundation for funding for the WSSP.



DVD: CONSIDER SHOWING “OVERVIEW,” “LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGERS’ PERSPECTIVE,” OFFICER PERSPECTIVE,” AND “YOUTH PERSPECTIVE.”



School Partners: If you are looking for partners in the *Schools* consider the following:

- Reach out to established contacts that either the police or theater might have in the schools.
- Meet with principals and ask them which teachers might be interested in the project. Meet also with drama teachers or social studies teachers who might want to make this a school project.
- Contact sports coaches who might be interested in having their teams participate in the project.
- Ask administrators and teachers what they think the problems are in their schools (violence, bullying, cultural conflict, racial tensions, lack of trust or cooperation between youth and police, etc.).
- Check school calendars and consider what the best times for such a project might be for schools.



DVD: CONSIDER SHOWING “OVERVIEW,” “COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE,” AND “YOUTH PERSPECTIVE.”



Project Timeline

Seattle Sample Timeline

The timeline for the West Side Story Project will vary depending on which parts are selected for replication. Below is a general timeline for the Seattle project:

Meet with potential partners	September
Identify funding sources for WSSP	October
Recruit Youth Advisory Council members	November
Planning for 2 summits (High & Middle School)	December – February
Hold summits	March
Start sessions for WSSP performance	April
WSSP Artistic performance	May
Town Hall/Community Forum on Youth Issues	May

White Plains Sample Timeline

The timeline in White Plains, New York, was similar although they did not do the Community Forum. They had even less time than Seattle, but they already had a youth planning team in place in the form of the Mayor's Youth Council. They also partnered primarily with one high school and one middle school.

Planning for 2 summits (High & Middle School)	January – March
Hold summits	March
Preparing for performance	April and May
Hold performance	May

Resources for the WSSP

Once you have identified your primary partners, discuss what you will need for your WSSP. Consider making a chart of Needs and Resources: what do we need and who might have the necessary resources? See the example below of some of the needs and resources identified in the Seattle WSSP:

Needs	Resources
Funding	Seattle Police Foundation, local arts funders, local businesses
Planning Team members	SPD, 5th Avenue Theater, Seattle Parks and Recreation
Site for summits	Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center
Recruiting youth for summits	Seattle Parks and Recreation, Seattle Public Schools
Facilitators for the summits	Seattle Neighborhood Group
Transportation for summits	Seattle Schools, SPD
Sites for performance workshops	Seattle Schools, LH Performing Arts Center
Site for forum	Town Hall Seattle
Moderator and panelists for forum	University of Washington, SPD, Center for Children and Youth Justice
Media and Marketing	SPD and 5th Avenue Media Relations
Videotaping events	SPD Video Unit and Seattle Channel



Budgeting & Funding Ideas

Sections of the WSSP can be conducted without much if any cost. Town Hall Seattle became a partner on the project and included the West Side Story Project event as part of its regularly occurring public events so the venue was free (although there was a small admission charge), the panelists and moderator appeared pro bono, the public access channel filmed it as part of their regular show, the actors appeared courtesy of the 5th Avenue Theatre, and publicizing was done by Town Hall and the Seattle Police Department in tandem with the 5th Avenue Theatre.

A summit workshop could be done in lieu of a full summit and possibly incorporated into another event. The role reversal workshop especially lends itself to use at community centers, within schools or even at juvenile detention centers or prisons as a stand-alone piece. For example, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) now does monthly role reversals, where police play youth and youth play police officers, with Phoenix House at little or no cost. Even a performance of original works based on themes from *West Side Story* can be done on a small budget if you tap into local community theater; some nonprofit theater groups provide support pro bono for youth projects like this one.

Seattle. The Seattle WSSP was funded primarily by the Seattle Police Foundation with additional support for theater staff provided by a grant from a local arts funder. Below is the budget request to the Seattle Police Foundation. All partners donated labor, with the exception of the WSSP coordinator and teaching artists. Also, several businesses and organizations provided in-kind support.

White Plains. Funding for their project came from the city of White Plains, the White Plains School District, SUNY Purchase Liberty Partnership, New York State Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Center funding, and SAMHSA Drug Free Communities funding.

Having identified a recurring funding source, White Plains has elected to do a project of similar scope annually that will continue the partnership among the city, the police, the schools and the White Plains Performing Arts Center.

Sample Budget

The Seattle West Side Story Project 2007

Budget to Seattle Police Foundation

Personnel	\$3,600.00
2 Seattle police officers will coordinate the project as part of their routine responsibilities.	\$0.00
Street Smarts/America Workshop Instructor \$100.00/per session x 2 sessions	\$200.00
5th Avenue Theatre WSSP Project Coordinator \$15.00/hour x 200 hours	\$3,000.00
5th Avenue Theatre Teaching Artists (2) \$100.00/per session x 2 sessions x 2 artists	\$400.00
5th Avenue Theatre Associate artistic director will donate 25% of his time to supervise the project coordinator and teaching artists	\$0.00
5th Avenue Theatre director of development will donate 10% of her time to coordinate public relations with community partners	\$0.00
Other Direct Costs	\$6,550.00
Student discounted tickets to <i>West Side Story</i> 200 tickets x \$15.00/per ticket	\$3,000.00
Teaching materials for the West Side Story Project Summits \$100.00/per session x 2 sessions	\$200.00
Meals \$7.50 each (breakfast and lunch) x 100 participants x 2 sessions	\$3,000.00
Giveaways: West Side Story Project T-shirts, CDs, posters, and water bottles with the project insignia	\$1,500.00
Rental of community center space for 2 sessions	\$350.00
Total Requested Budget	\$11,650.00

Media for the Project

Receiving local, national, and international media attention³, the WSSP provides an opportunity for law enforcement agencies to highlight the positive work they do in youth violence prevention, and for theaters to showcase their educational outreach missions. In Seattle, the theater and the police department worked in tandem on the media and marketing for the project. Both organizations donated their media unit's time on the project.

Note that one of the elements of this project that captured the imagination of the media was the unique partnership between law enforcement and the theater and their common goal to reduce youth violence. Doing all press jointly helps to underscore the partnership to the media.

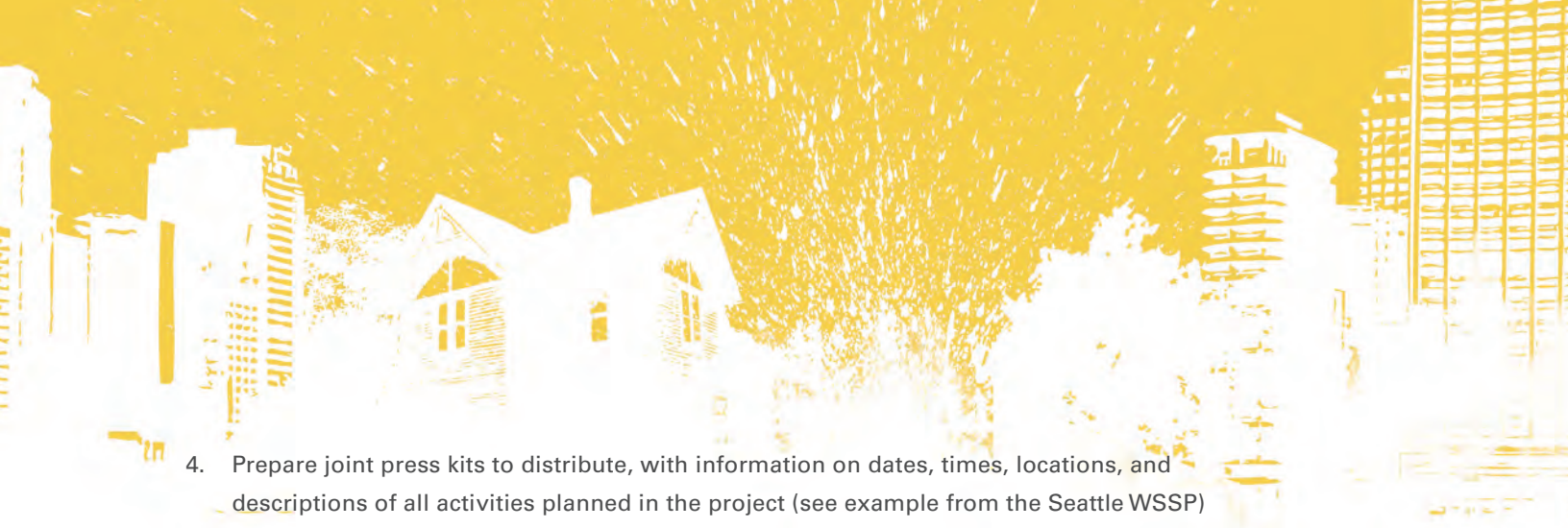


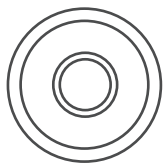
SEE "WSSP PRESS CONFERENCE" ON THE ACCOMPANYING DVD FOR AN EXAMPLE OF HOW SEATTLE INTRODUCED THE PROJECT TO THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC.

Below are some suggestions on how to organize your WSSP media campaign:

1. Primary partners should involve their public information officer and/or media relations representatives early in the planning process. Ask them to attend a few planning meetings so that they understand the project and the partners involved.
2. Hold a meeting with the media relations units of primary partners to discuss the specifics of the media and marketing strategy. Encourage this as a joint, collaborative effort and suggest co-authorship when releasing any information on the project.
3. Plan a joint press conference near the first event of the WSSP and send out a joint press advisory. Prepare talking points for each major partner to cover during the press conference. Make sure youth involved in the project are in attendance and standing on the podium. You might even ask one of the youth to prepare remarks. In Seattle, all the youth wore a specially designed WSSPT-shirt at the press conference.

3. The *Seattle Times* and the Associated Press ran news articles; all local affiliates of ABC, NBC, and CBS covered the youth summits and news conference; interviews were featured on the local NPR station; the Seattle Channel (public station) produced a short documentary on the project and aired the full Seattle Town Hall event; the Leonard Bernstein Organization (NY) forwarded news clips to the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *New York Times*, and BBC 2 covered the story.

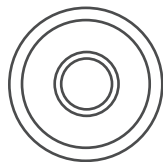
- 
4. Prepare joint press kits to distribute, with information on dates, times, locations, and descriptions of all activities planned in the project (see example from the Seattle WSSP) and listing all major partners and sponsors. Send press kits to those who could not attend the event.



SEE "JOINT PRESS RELEASE" ON CD.

5. Make follow-up phone calls to invited media to encourage them to attend the press conference, emphasizing the unique partnership between a law enforcement agency and a theater working together for youth gang violence prevention.
6. Have at least one media relations representative at each event to guide the media who cover the event, and to set up interviews with appropriate event participants. The person can also make calls the day of the event to remind media of the uniqueness of the partnership and project.

For articles on the WSSP see Sullivan, Jennifer, "West Side Story inspires anti-gang program," in the *Seattle Times*, March 29, 2007 (www.seattletimes.com) and Liebson, Richard, "White Plains to get program that uses art to combat youth violence," in the Lower Hudson Journal News, January 3, 2008 (www.thejournalnews.com). See also the Seattle 5th Avenue Theatre article, "The West Side Story Project: New Seattle gang prevention and education program makes theater and public conversation a force for change in teens' lives" (Encore: 50th Anniversary of *West Side Story*, June 2007).

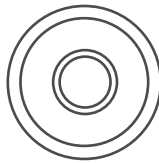


SEE ARTICLE ON CD.

Evaluating the Program

Project Planning and Evaluation

To assist in planning the project, partners can use a pre-project survey to help better understand each other's goals for the project and to establish desired outcomes. A post-project survey can then help measure those outcomes and capture other important results. In some cases, it might be useful to conduct follow-up interviews with project partners to ascertain what worked well and what might be improved. Consider asking a local university or college to assist with interviewing and data analysis. Graduate students in criminal justice, sociology, or even management programs might be willing to assist at little or no cost as part of a class or research project.



SAMPLES OF PRE- AND POST-PROJECT SURVEY FORMS ARE PROVIDED ON THE ACCOMPANYING CD.



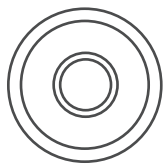
Seattle WSSP Youth Advisory Council.



Summit Evaluation

While evaluation of prevention efforts is difficult, analysis of surveys given to youth attending the summits in Seattle demonstrated that as a result of the WSSP, participants had a significantly enhanced perception of police (a 4.28 mean on a scale of 1 to 5). This was equally true for at-risk youth and those deemed not at-risk. Qualitative responses highlighted that participants' perceptions of police changed from one of law enforcer to helper. Some of the youth spoke of "seeing police officers as people who want the best for youth" or "seeing that officers are there to help youth prevent problems."

Also significantly enhanced was the understanding of the realities of gang involvement. Responses showed that participants realized that gang involvement was dangerous and could realistically result in death and that there was help available for youth who want to stay out of gangs. In fact, at one of the Seattle summits, a youth approached a police officer to ask for help getting out of a gang. As a result, the police worked with him and his family and have devised a plan for helping the youth to safely exit gang life.



SAMPLE SUMMIT EVALUATION FORMS ARE AVAILABLE ON THE ACCOMPANYING CD.



Intellectual Property


What You Need to Know about Intellectual Property Issues for This Project

Below is a detailed description of Intellectual Property and the rights that it covers. Both the musical and movie of *West Side Story* including all music, lyrics, dialog, characters, and choreography are covered under these rights and you will need to consider them when you are making decisions about how you will use the stage or film material in your project. Every project will be different and use the materials in a unique way; therefore, we cannot make a specific recommendation on how you should approach these rights. We hope the information below provides you with the tools to make the right permissions choices for your project.

Intellectual Property (IP) is a legal field that refers to creations of the mind such as musical, literary, and artistic works; inventions; and symbols, names, images, and designs used in commerce, including copyrights, trademarks, patents, and related rights. Under intellectual property law, the holder of one of these abstract “properties” has certain exclusive rights to the creative work, commercial symbol, or invention which is covered by it.

Intellectual property confers a bundle of exclusive rights in relation to the particular form or manner in which ideas or information are expressed or manifested. The term “intellectual property” denotes the specific legal rights that authors, inventors, and other IP holders may hold and exercise, and not the intellectual work itself. Use of another person’s intellectual property will usually involve royalty payments or permissions, and should always include proper credit to the source.

In dramatic works, the following were approved at the Berne, an international copyright agreement designed to protect literary and artistic works.



Subject to certain permitted reservations, limitations, or exceptions, the following are among the rights that must be recognized as exclusive rights of authorization:

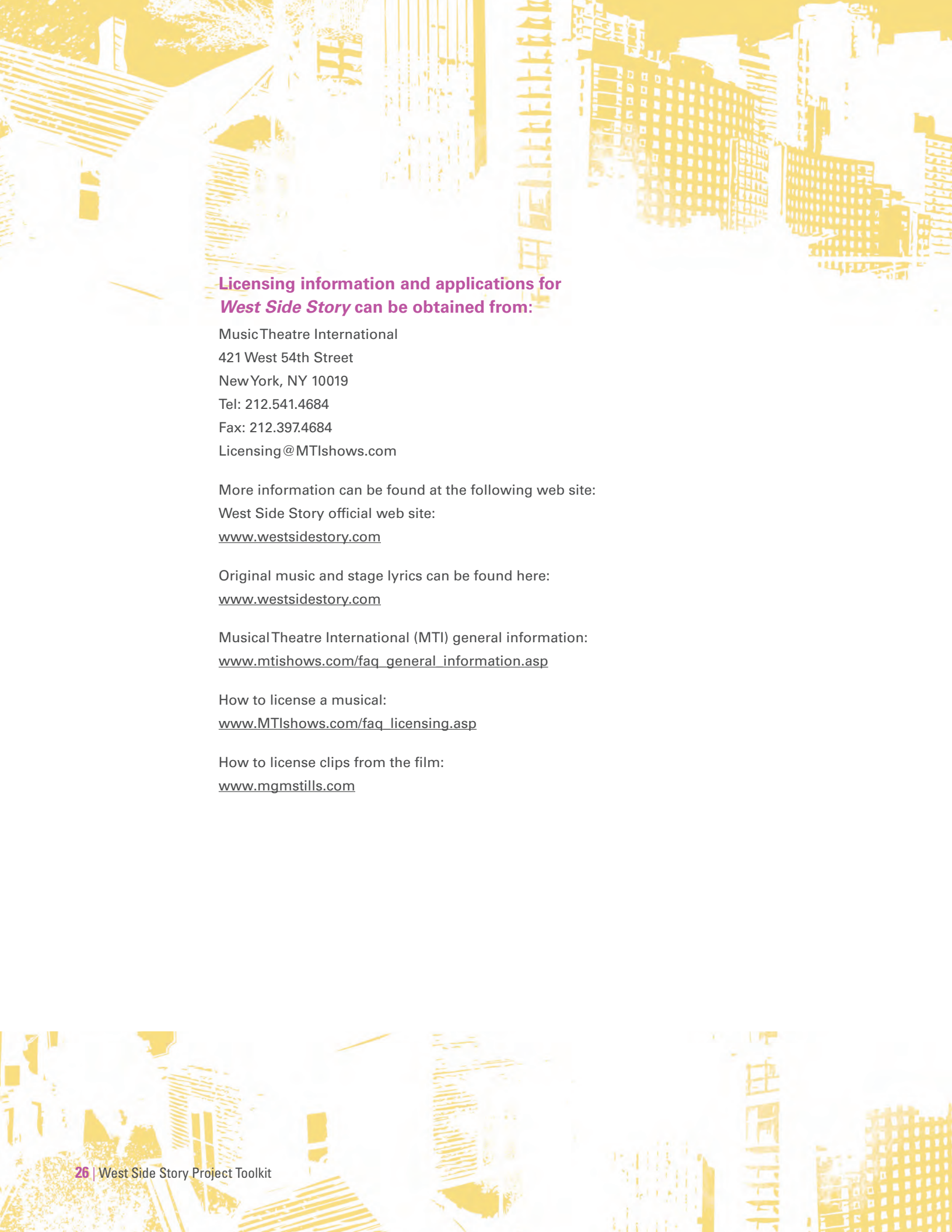
- The right to translate
- The right to make adaptations and arrangements of the work
- The right to perform in public dramatic, dramatico-musical and musical works
- The right to recite in public literary works
- The right to communicate to the public the performance of such works
- The right to broadcast
- The right to make reproductions in any manner or form
- The right to use the work as a basis for an audiovisual work, and the right to reproduce, distribute, perform in public, or communicate to the public that audiovisual work.

The Convention also provides for “moral rights”: the right to claim authorship of the work and the right to object to any mutilation or deformation or other modification of, or other derogatory action in relation to, the work which would be prejudicial to the author’s honor or reputation (www.theatrewithoutborders.com).

Individual songs from *West Side Story* are administered by the agents for the Leonard Bernstein Music Company LLC (ASCAP). Agent for Rental and Print: Boosey & Hawkes (www.boosey.com); Agent for Broadcasting and Recording: Universal Music Publishing Group (www.umpg.com).

Permission to make videos of or to broadcast theatrical productions of *West Side Story*, in whole or part, is generally not available.

In general, to utilize copy written material, you must obtain permission. In the case of *West Side Story*, you would obtain a license and potentially pay royalties. Your project team should decide how you are going to use *West Side Story* and if you are using the musical or the movie or both. Then consult your area expert or legal counsel to determine next steps in licensing the material. If you are partnering with a local theater, they should be familiar with the licensing process and could take the lead on approaching the appropriate parties. Very often they will have established relationships that could be beneficial for obtaining the rights at little or no cost, particularly if the purpose of the project is educational.



**Licensing information and applications for
West Side Story can be obtained from:**

Music Theatre International
421 West 54th Street
New York, NY 10019
Tel: 212.541.4684
Fax: 212.397.4684
Licensing@MTIshows.com

More information can be found at the following web site:

West Side Story official web site:

www.westsidestory.com

Original music and stage lyrics can be found here:

www.westsidestory.com

Musical Theatre International (MTI) general information:

www.mtishows.com/faq_general_information.asp

How to license a musical:

www.MTIshows.com/faq_licensing.asp

How to license clips from the film:

www.mgmstills.com

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“If you would have told me 10 years ago that I was going to do this I’d have said ‘you’re nuts’ ...I can’t begin to tell you how glad I am that I did...When you look at how we got to interact with each other, let them be the cops and order me around...it was unlike any other experience I’ve ever had.”

– Sergeant Joe Bauer, Seattle Police Department



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
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To obtain details on COPS programs, call the
COPS Office Response Center at 800.421.6770

Visit COPS online at www.cops.usdoj.gov

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WEST SIDE PROJECT

PLANNING THE YOUTH SUMMIT



West Side Story Project Toolkit: Crime Prevention on a New Stage

Produced By: U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

Authors: Pamela Beal, Ph.D. and Liza Comtois

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About the Youth Summits

The WSSP Youth Summits are a series of interactive workshops based on scenes from *West Side Story* that spark dialogue between youth and officers about the issues of youth and gang violence, youth–police relations, and cultural conflict. The summits help law enforcement to connect with youth through drama and music. As Officer Adriana Mungia of the LAPD Foothills Division says, “this project helps youth on so many levels. It builds self-esteem, teaches ways to deal with conflict, and teaches communication skills.”

Purpose of the Youth Summits

- To create a dialogue between youth and law enforcement about youth violence, gangs, and youth–police relationships
- To create a dialogue between youth from different backgrounds about cultural conflict and prejudice
- To engage interested youth in producing, with the assistance of teaching artists and theater staff, their own art and drama based on themes from *West Side Story*.

Youth Driven

Using selected scenes from *West Side Story*, a youth advisory council works with an adult planning team to create a series of workshops for the summits that use interactive drama to spark these dialogues. The summit and its workshops are most effective if they are created and marketed by youth.

“In planning the West Side Story Project it is essential that it be youth driven. We got a group of students together to create an advisory council so that we could create a summit that they and other students would be interested in attending.”

– Seattle Police Detective Kim Bogucki



SEE THE ACCOMPANYING DVD FOR INTERVIEWS WITH YOUTH ABOUT PLANNING THE SUMMITS, LEADING AND PARTICIPATING IN THE WORKSHOPS, AND REASONS THEY WOULD RECOMMEND THE WSSP TO OTHER YOUTH.



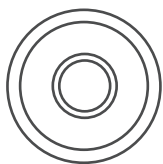
Putting Together the Planning Team

Step 1. Identify a planning group that includes individuals from law enforcement, a theater company, and someone from a governmental or community organization dedicated to youth. Ask school resource officers, juvenile unit officers and/or gang unit officers to participate. Often, theaters have an education program coordinator who would be a good choice for the planning team.

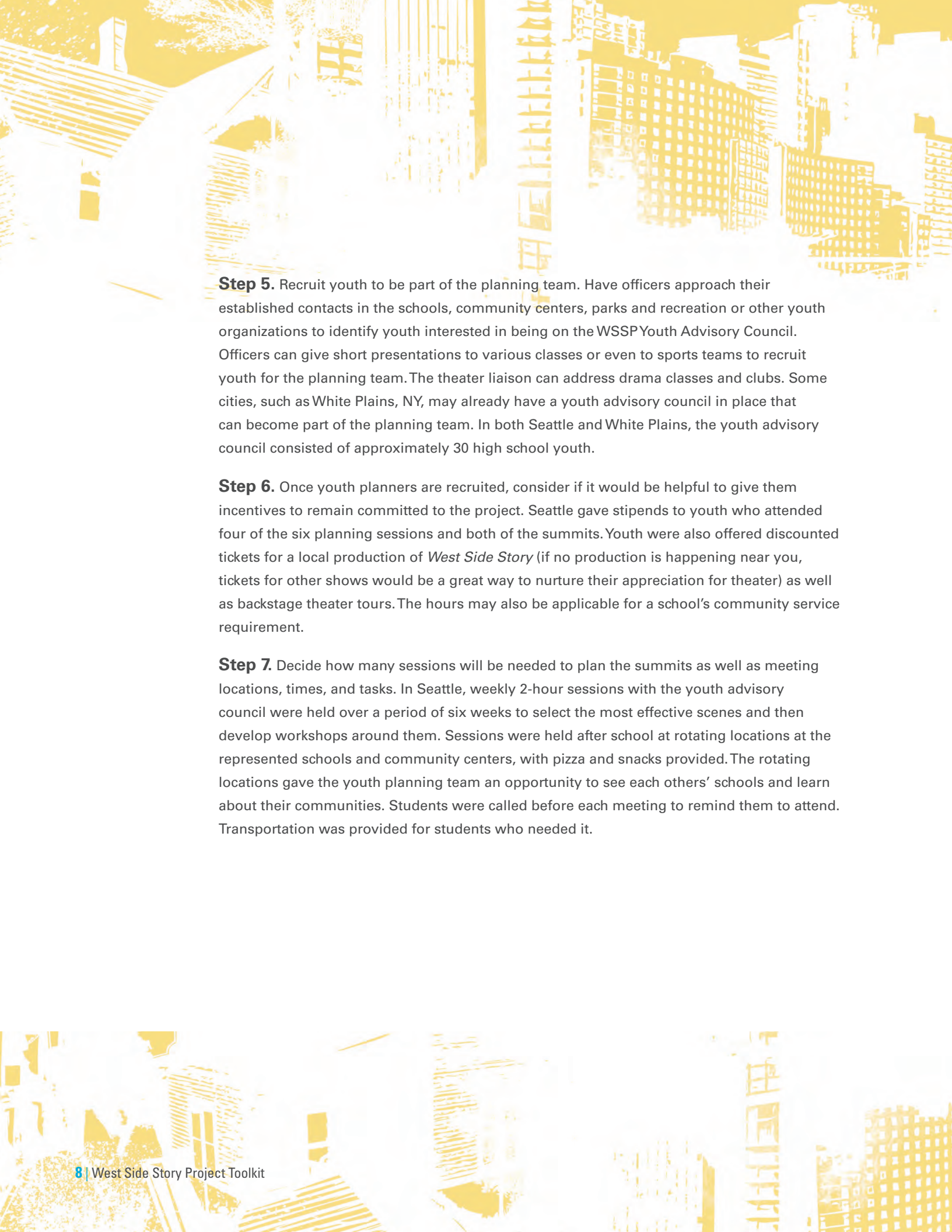
Step 2. Designate one person from the planning group as the coordinator for the summits. In Seattle, this person was the theater liaison, funded in part by a grant from the Seattle Police Foundation. In White Plains, New York, a City Youth Bureau staff member took the lead organizational responsibility for the summits in addition to her regular duties.

Step 3. Discuss which high schools and middle schools might want to participate in the summits. In both Seattle and White Plains, two summits were held, one for high school students and one for middle school students. In Seattle, the planning group selected four different schools to participate from varied geographical locations in the city. Two of the schools had strong drama programs and two were in areas with student populations that were somewhat at risk for gang involvement. The four schools were diverse academically, economically, and racially. The police and the theater liaison established connections with specific teachers or staff members at each of the schools, making working with the schools easier. Since White Plains was a smaller city, it drew on the major high school in the city as its primary planning partner.

Step 4. Invite school administrators and selected teachers to a meeting to discuss the project and its goals, to identify the youth population who would participate in the summits, and to establish a timeline for the summits that fits the school calendar. Ask that one or two school staff be part of the summit planning group.



SEE YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL APPLICATION FORM ON DATA CD.



Step 5. Recruit youth to be part of the planning team. Have officers approach their established contacts in the schools, community centers, parks and recreation or other youth organizations to identify youth interested in being on the WSSP Youth Advisory Council. Officers can give short presentations to various classes or even to sports teams to recruit youth for the planning team. The theater liaison can address drama classes and clubs. Some cities, such as White Plains, NY, may already have a youth advisory council in place that can become part of the planning team. In both Seattle and White Plains, the youth advisory council consisted of approximately 30 high school youth.

Step 6. Once youth planners are recruited, consider if it would be helpful to give them incentives to remain committed to the project. Seattle gave stipends to youth who attended four of the six planning sessions and both of the summits. Youth were also offered discounted tickets for a local production of *West Side Story* (if no production is happening near you, tickets for other shows would be a great way to nurture their appreciation for theater) as well as backstage theater tours. The hours may also be applicable for a school's community service requirement.

Step 7. Decide how many sessions will be needed to plan the summits as well as meeting locations, times, and tasks. In Seattle, weekly 2-hour sessions with the youth advisory council were held over a period of six weeks to select the most effective scenes and then develop workshops around them. Sessions were held after school at rotating locations at the represented schools and community centers, with pizza and snacks provided. The rotating locations gave the youth planning team an opportunity to see each others' schools and learn about their communities. Students were called before each meeting to remind them to attend. Transportation was provided for students who needed it.

Using Seattle as an example: Summit Logistics Agenda

Seattle West Side Story Project

High School Summit

Friday, March 30, 2007

8:00 AM– 2:00 PM

Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center

8:00 AM – 8:15 AM - Pick Up

Students will be picked up from school and transported by bus.

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM - Student Registration

Students will register for the summit and receive their group assignments. They will then proceed into the theater and/or go to the Multi-purpose Room for a snack. Students arriving after 8:50 AM will go directly into the theater after registration.

9:00 AM – 9:25 AM - Opening Session in Theater

Session will include the following:

- Welcome remarks by the 5th Avenue and Seattle Police Department (SPD)
- A live performance of a number from *West Side Story*
- A keynote address by a former gang member from Project SAVE
- Instructions for the rest of the day and division into groups for first workshop session.

9:30 AM – 10:30 AM - Workshop Session One

Three simultaneous 1-hour workshops will be offered facilitated by SPD officers and staff from the 5th Avenue Theatre. Students will be accompanied by an officer and teacher assigned to their group. They will go to one of the following workshops:

Workshop A: “Snowing the Cops” This workshop will provide an opportunity for a reverse role play with SPD officers and youth.

Workshop B: “The Jet Song” This workshop will explore life in and out of gangs, myths and realities about gang involvement, and gang-resistance strategies.

Workshop C: “America” This workshop will explore cultural differences and stereotypes, as well as help youth learn to value differences.

10:35 AM – 11:35 AM - Workshop Session Two

Students will rotate to their second workshop.

11:40 AM – 12:05 PM - Lunch in Multi-purpose Room

All students will go to the Multi-purpose Room for lunch.

12:10 PM – 1:10 PM - Workshop Session Three

Students will rotate to their third workshop.

1:15 PM – 1:45 PM - Final Session, Wrap-Up and Next Steps in Theater

All students will return to the theater for: “Officer Krupke” discussion on the Juvenile Justice System

- Raffle
- Group photo.
- 1:45 PM – 2:15 PM - Students return to school



Planning Team Tasks

Task 1. Become familiar with *West Side Story*. Before planning begins, have someone give an overview of *West Side Story* as well as a summary of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* from which it was derived. If possible, show the film in its entirety to the youth advisory council before planning begins, although a few scenes can also be shown at each planning session.

Task 2. Get to know each other. Some suggested questions:

- Why did you decide to participate in this project?
- What are you looking forward to in this project?
- For those of you who have encountered police officers, what is your impression of the police? What formed your impression?
- How many of you have been to a theatrical performance? Has anyone thought about working in the theater?
- How many know something about gangs? What do you know?

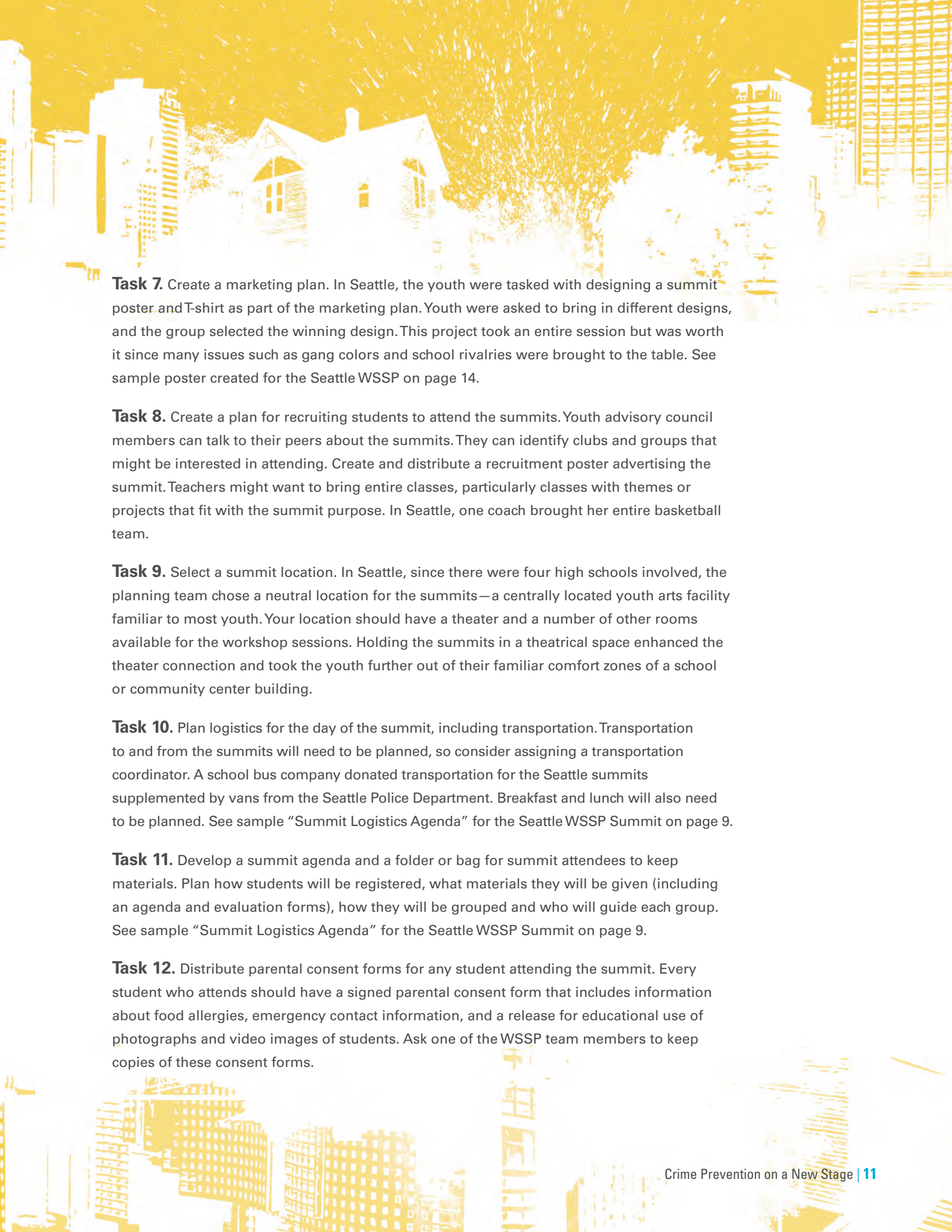
Task 3. Select scenes from the film. Choose scenes that have relevance to youth issues in your area. Youth involvement in the process of scene selection is key as they know their peers best and know what appeals to them.

Task 4. Discuss selected scenes in depth. After watching the selected scene, ask youth:

- What is this scene about?
- Does the situation seem familiar?
- What about this scene is relevant to your peers?
- What are possible discussion issues in this scene?

Task 5. Choose scenes to use for workshops at the summit and develop workshops around those scenes. See examples on page 15.

Task 6. Identify workshop facilitators. Identify adult workshop facilitators and consider partnering them with a youth advisory council member to help facilitate the workshop. Ask youth advisory council members to develop questions they might ask in the workshop to help stimulate discussion.



Task 7. Create a marketing plan. In Seattle, the youth were tasked with designing a summit poster and T-shirt as part of the marketing plan. Youth were asked to bring in different designs, and the group selected the winning design. This project took an entire session but was worth it since many issues such as gang colors and school rivalries were brought to the table. See sample poster created for the Seattle WSSP on page 14.

Task 8. Create a plan for recruiting students to attend the summits. Youth advisory council members can talk to their peers about the summits. They can identify clubs and groups that might be interested in attending. Create and distribute a recruitment poster advertising the summit. Teachers might want to bring entire classes, particularly classes with themes or projects that fit with the summit purpose. In Seattle, one coach brought her entire basketball team.

Task 9. Select a summit location. In Seattle, since there were four high schools involved, the planning team chose a neutral location for the summits—a centrally located youth arts facility familiar to most youth. Your location should have a theater and a number of other rooms available for the workshop sessions. Holding the summits in a theatrical space enhanced the theater connection and took the youth further out of their familiar comfort zones of a school or community center building.

Task 10. Plan logistics for the day of the summit, including transportation. Transportation to and from the summits will need to be planned, so consider assigning a transportation coordinator. A school bus company donated transportation for the Seattle summits supplemented by vans from the Seattle Police Department. Breakfast and lunch will also need to be planned. See sample “Summit Logistics Agenda” for the Seattle WSSP Summit on page 9.

Task 11. Develop a summit agenda and a folder or bag for summit attendees to keep materials. Plan how students will be registered, what materials they will be given (including an agenda and evaluation forms), how they will be grouped and who will guide each group. See sample “Summit Logistics Agenda” for the Seattle WSSP Summit on page 9.

Task 12. Distribute parental consent forms for any student attending the summit. Every student who attends should have a signed parental consent form that includes information about food allergies, emergency contact information, and a release for educational use of photographs and video images of students. Ask one of the WSSP team members to keep copies of these consent forms.



SEE SUMMIT FIELD TRIP PERMISSION AND RELEASE FORM ON DATA CD.

Task 13. Meet with teachers to assign students to summit groups. Students were divided into three groups of approximately 30–35 youth in the Seattle summit, and assignments to these groups (indicated by a colored wristband) were pre-determined by adult planners and teachers to mix students from various schools and avoid any possible conflicts.

Task 14. Decide the role of the media at the summits. For some workshops it might be best not to have media present as you want participants to speak freely—for instance in the “Jet Song” workshop on gangs. One workshop that is particularly “media friendly” is the “Snowing the Cops” role reversal. Exceptions can be made for those documenting the project.

Task 15. Hold a press conference for the event. Have members of the youth advisory council attend and perhaps ask one of them to prepare remarks. For additional information on planning a press conference, see “Media for the Project” in Book 2: Partners & Resources.



SEE KICK-OFF PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE ACCOMPANYING DVD.



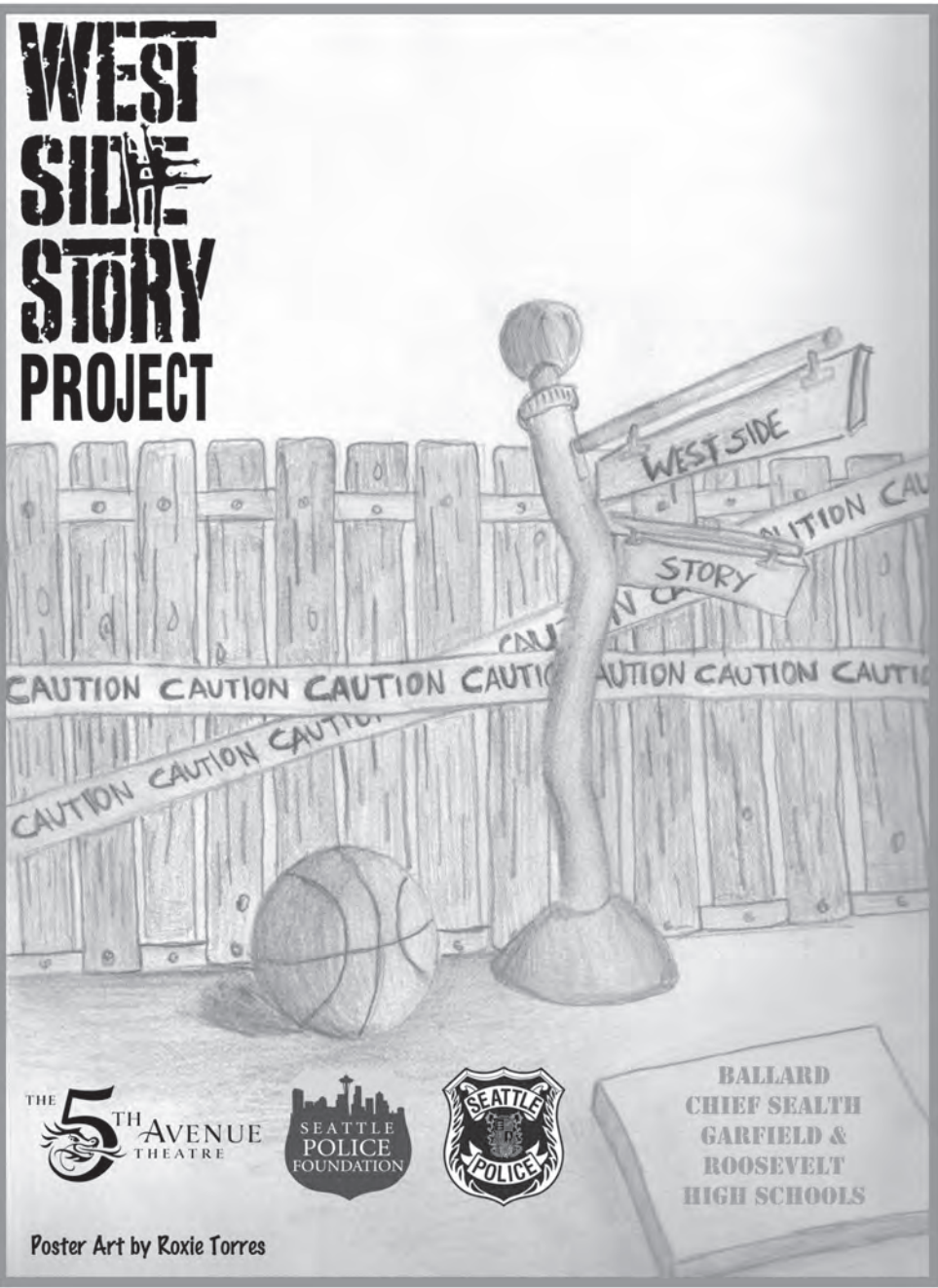
Using Seattle as an example: Staffing

Summit staffing, in addition to the adult planning team and workshop leaders:

- 3–6 registrars (separate names by 2–3 sections of alphabet)
- Summit emcee who leads general sessions
- Summit keynote speaker (optional)
- Summit performers (optional)
- Talent wrangler (if performers are included)
- Transportation coordinator (if students are being bussed in)
- 2 runners who can take care of any miscellaneous problems that arise
- At least 1 police officer to travel all day with each group (3 groups = 3 police officers)
- A teacher should also be assigned to accompany each group
- A teaching artist in each workshop to lead the theater game and to encourage interest in the performance
- 5–10 volunteers to assist with set up, summit bag and T-shirt distribution, lunch service, technical needs, clean up, etc.
- If media is present, assign a person to host them so they are not wandering without a guide. Perhaps ask a law enforcement media relations representative to attend and perform this function.

Workshop Staffing:

- **2 workshop facilitators** who will be responsible for keeping time in their workshops, including setting aside enough time for youth to fill out evaluations at the end of each workshop
- **2 police officers** per scenario for the “Snowing the Cops” Role Reversal workshop
- **Teaching artist** for each workshop if possible
- **A teacher and officer** assigned to the group to help them get to their next workshop on time with all present and to collect evaluations at the end of the day
- **Volunteers for setup.** If possible, set up rooms the day before and arrive about 90 minutes early the day of the summit to set up all the AV equipment, distribute the DVDs for each workshop, organize the registration tables, the summit bags and T-shirts, set up the breakfast and prep for the lunch service.



Summit program cover and poster designed by WSSP Seattle Youth Advisory Council Student Member, Roxie Torres (2007).



Sample Workshops

The following are workshops developed for the Seattle WSSP summits:

Snowing the Cops (Scene 3) – Youth-Police Interaction

This workshop is a role reversal in which the police play youth and youth play police officers. The Seattle Police used scenarios that were particular to the issues in Seattle. Feel free to create your own scenarios based on the youth–police issues in your own jurisdiction. See example scenarios on pages 19–20.

Jet Song (Scene 4) – Myths and Realities of Gangs

Ask a gang unit officer to lead this workshop, perhaps together with a former gang member who now works for good in the community. The “Jet Song” can be used to dispel myths about gangs, discuss the local gang problem, warn about recruitment tactics, and suggest ways to avoid gang involvement.

America (Scene 11) – Valuing Difference

Use “America” to help youth recognize their own stereotypes of others, including new immigrants, both positive and negative. Perhaps use first with the youth advisory council as a focus group exercise. Consider having older youth (high school) run this workshop for younger youth (middle school).

Gee, Officer Krupke (Scene 13) – Juvenile Justice System

Use “Krupke” to educate youth about the juvenile justice system (e.g., the roles of police officers, judges, district attorneys), to discuss the problems that youth who do not have a support system face and where they might get help, or discuss youth–police relations.

Other possible scenes: The following are scenes that were reviewed by the Seattle Youth Advisory Council but not used for the summits. However, some of them were used as focus groups with the youth council. The Seattle planning team found that even if a scene wasn’t selected, the dialogue around the issues that the scene raised was valuable for the youth.



War Council (Scene 15) – Conflict Resolution

This scene can be used to explore the pressures of adolescence, including peer relationships and violence, with a focus on violence prevention and conflict resolution.

Rumble (Scene 21) – Consequences of Violence

Use “Rumble” to discuss how violence can escalate quickly even for people not inclined to violence. Also use this scene to discuss the serious consequences of resolving conflict through violence.

Cool (Scene 25) – Anger Management

“Cool” can be used to discuss anger management issues, violence that erupts from minor disputes, and the relation of power to keeping your “cool.”

A Boy Like That (Scene 27) – Issues of Assimilation

This scene might be used to highlight issues of assimilation for new immigrants and minority cultures (including sexual minorities). Parents want their children to marry in their own culture, stay with their own kind. How do immigrant youth meld with the new culture without losing their parents’ culture? This scene might also be used as a focus group exercise with the youth advisory council.

Possible discussion questions: What friends have you had from different cultures or social groups? What differences existed between you? What did you like about their culture or social group? What didn’t you like? Can you have friendships, even date, outside your culture or with someone your family might not approve? What if your younger sister was dating someone from another culture or another “gang”? How would you handle it?

Finale: Tony’s Death (Scene 31) – Violence Begets Violence

The finale can be used to discuss how violence begets violence, the senselessness of violence, and the loss and pain that result from violence. It can also be used to discuss alternatives to revenge.



Pre-Workshop Preparation for the “Snowing the Cops” Role Reversal

Working with the Youth Advisory Council: Prior to the “Snowing the Cops” summit workshop, police officers and members of the youth advisory council can work together to prep for this workshop and develop some of their own scenarios. See pages 19–20 for examples of scenarios used in Seattle.

Options: Hold pre-workshop discussion of various scenes between officers and the youth advisory council. Watch scenes 2 and 3 (“Prologue” and “Snowing the Cops”) and scene 13 (“Gee, Officer Krupke”) from the *West Side Story* DVD. (NOTE, *WEST SIDE STORY* DVD MUST BE PURCHASED SEPARATELY.) Use the following outlines to start discussion about the scenes:

Scene 2 Prologue

- Jets bullying/intimidating younger youth. They go around little girl playing – What does that say?
- Jets encounter Sharks and taunt them. Then power shifts to Sharks – Why?
- There is no dialogue in the first half of this scene but what is conveyed?
- What are the 2 gangs fighting over? Why?
- Have you ever known people who hate each other without knowing each other?

Scene 3 Snowing the Cops

Police arrive (Lt. Schreck). How does Lt. Schreck handle the situation?

- Does it work? Why or why not?
- What does he say to the Sharks? To the Jets?
- How do they respond?

Scene 14 Gee, Officer Krupke

- What does Krupke say to the Jets?
- How do they respond to Krupke?
- How do the Jets explain why they get into trouble?
- What does the “system” say is wrong with them?



What problems involving youth do police deal with in your jurisdiction? Police officers might wish to meet with the youth planning group to develop scenarios to use for the workshop. See also Role Reversal Scenarios used by Seattle Police Department.

Go over the scenarios you will be using at the workshop and run through them once or twice, preferably with the youth planning group. All officers should know all of the scenarios used for role reversals, but each group of officers should do the same scenario for each workshop.

Led by police officers, this workshop is a role reversal in which the police play youth and youth play police officers. The Seattle Police used scenarios that were particular to the issues in Seattle. Feel free to create your own scenarios based on the youth–police issues in your own jurisdiction.

For Youth:

Have you ever had an interaction with the police? How did it go?

For Police:

Does this encounter with youth seem familiar? How so?





Option

If officers will be working with an alienated group of youth, consider holding a pre-role reversal dialogue between youth and police to break the ice.

- What do you hope to gain from today? Why are you here today?
- What is one perception/belief I have about you?
- What is one thing that you do not know about me? (This is intended to possibly dispel the perception or belief from the previous question.)
- What is one thing that would make our interaction easier?

Role Reversal Scenarios for “Snowing the Cops” Workshop

Use these scenarios or develop your own, perhaps together with your youth advisory council.


Scenario #1 Marijuana: You and your partner drive up on a large gathering of juveniles hanging out at a local skateboard park. You find stereos blaring, skateboards everywhere, and the smell of a pungent substance in the air. The park closes at 10:00 PM and it is now 9:55 PM. What do you do?

Suggested talking points with youth:

- Dealing vs. smoking
- Marijuana vs. other drugs
- School grounds vs. public space
- Consequences – suspension, loss of housing, problems for college, or job applications.

Scenario #2 Social vs. Terry Stop: You and your partner are driving through a residential area around 3:00 AM. You observe two youth wearing dark clothing and carrying a large bag. There has been a series of car prowls in the area. What do you do?

- Social stop can turn into a Terry stop and then arrest.
- Questions to ask: Am I free to go? Are you detaining us?
- Review Obstruction.



Scenario #3 Party Scene: You and your partner are dispatched to a loud party call. Upon arrival, many cars are parked illegally, trash and bottles are everywhere, the music is very loud, and it appears that a party with juveniles is in progress. What do you do?

- Youth 1 is uncooperative: Detain and transfer to precinct to ID. MIP (Minor in Possession). False reporting.
- Youth 2 cooperates: Mom and Dad pick up. Cited and released for MIP.
- Youth 3 flees the scene and gets in a wreck: MIP, DUI, insurance, suspended license, possibly charged with vehicular manslaughter/homicide.
- Youth 4 is the homeowner's kid: held responsible for actions of others.

Scenario #4 Traffic Stop: At 11:00 PM on a Friday, you and your partner observe a car speed through a red light. One passenger is not wearing a seat belt. You pull the car over. What do you do next?

- Good stop – license, insurance, cooperative = ticket or warning
- Bad stop – no license, no insurance, uncooperative = ?
- Seatbelt violation.

Scenario #5 Domestic Violence: You and your partner are dispatched to a disturbance/ fight at a local apartment complex. Upon arrival, you hear screaming coming from the unit. No one answers your knocking and announcing. The yelling continues. What do you do?

- Exigent circumstances
- Mandatory arrest
- No contact order
- DV covers family members, roommates, friends living together.

NOTE OF THANKS: We would like to thank Kathy Kaminski of Seattle Neighborhood Group and Darlene Sellers of King County Parks and Recreation for their help in developing the role reversal workshop. Special thanks also goes to King County Sheriffs Deputy Steve Cox for his contribution to the role reversal workshops, and for dedicating his life to making the White Center community a safer place.



Workshop 1 - “Snowing the Cops” Role Reversal

Purpose of Workshop: To give youth a chance to see from a police officer’s perspective, to help develop communication between youth and police officers, and to educate youth about the law.

Workshop Directions: The ratio of police to students or youth for this workshop should be 2 officers to 4-6 youth, with a maximum of 25 participants. If possible allow 1 ½ hours, although if the workshop is done during a summit, you will likely only have 50 minutes.

Facilitator: Show “Snowing the Cops” scene 3 from *West Side Story*. Ask a few questions about the youth–police interactions in the scene (see suggestions above) just to make sure they understand what happens in the scene.

Explain that for this workshop, 2 officers and 4-6 youth will prepare a short skit depicting one of the types of encounters that occur most frequently between youth and police in your jurisdiction. See sample scenarios on pages 19–20.

Divide students into 4 groups by counting off numbers 1–4. Give each student a copy of the scenario that they will be performing.

Explain to the workshop participants that in this workshop, the officers will play youth and the youth will play officers.

Officers: Officers introduce themselves and youth introduce themselves. Use jokes to break the ice and relax students. Perhaps have props such as fake badges or guns, old police hats or vests.

Officers ask the youth in their group the following questions:

- What do you know about the law in this circumstance?
- Have any of you been in this kind of situation?
- If so, do you want to use that situation?
- Who wants to play what role?

Officers explain the law behind the scenario and provide ideas of how police might act and what they might say. For example, explain what an officer might do in a scenario of stopping youth with cause. Also explain any technical terms or legal language (e.g., “Terry stop” or drug-free zones).

Officers should let youth help plan the scenario. Take about 10 minutes to plan and practice a couple of dry runs. Make sure every one knows safety is primary—don’t hurt anyone.



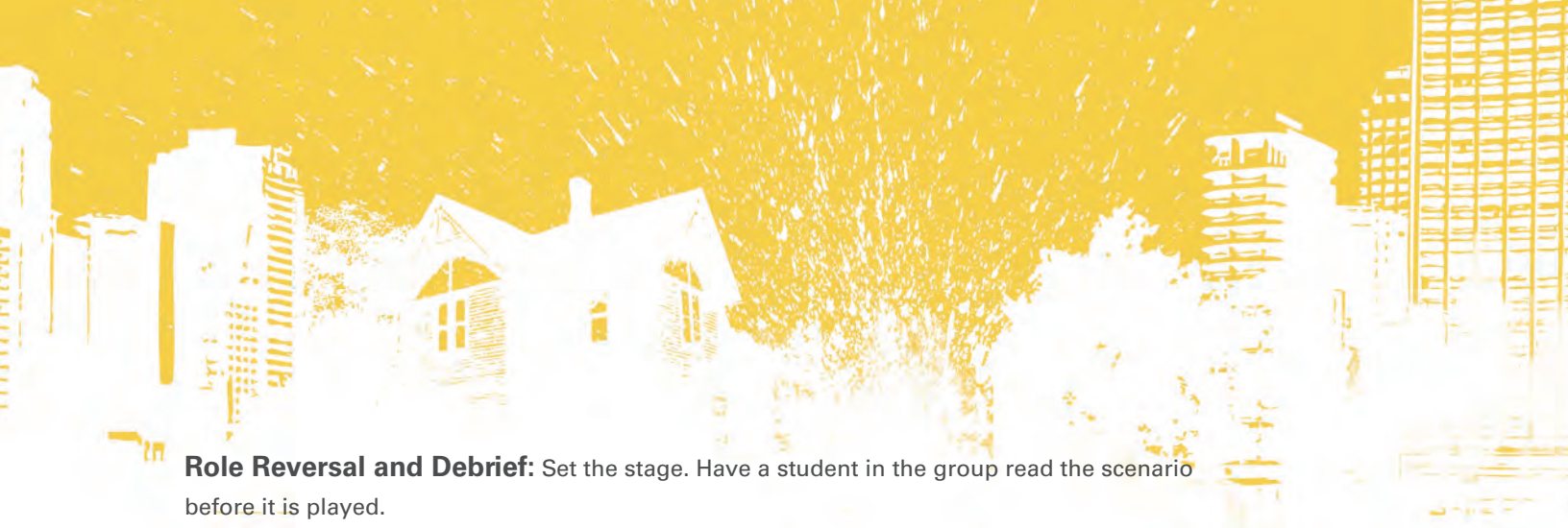
Seattle WSSP Youth Advisory Council planning meeting.

Facilitator: Workshop facilitator walks around to each of the groups to make sure they are progressing and to keep them on point.

Before each group does their scenario, facilitator reminds them to face audience and to project.

Note: Stick to time frame so that everyone gets a chance to act and to discuss.

Facilitator reminds entire workshop to pay attention as they will want others’ attention when it is their turn.



Role Reversal and Debrief: Set the stage. Have a student in the group read the scenario before it is played.

Play out scenario; officer stops scenario after a few minutes.

Police officers or facilitator should debrief first with the youth in the scenario (in front of large group) after each role reversal:

What did you learn from the role reversal?

What did you learn about the law?

How did your understanding of the police change?

(If there is any rough treatment, ask “Why did you rough up the person? Is that your perception of the police? Where did you get that perception? From someone you know or did you see it on TV or in a movie?”)

Officers should emphasize safety issues during an interaction and explain that they do what they do to remain safe.

Then, if there is time, open up the debrief to the entire workshop. Avoid letting people tell “I” stories (“this is what happened to me”) in the interest of time. This scenario can then be used to explain to the students the proper way to respond to being stopped by a police officer, the law about the kind of circumstance in the scenario and what to do to make a complaint.

- Did you see anything wrong with the way things went down?
- What could the officers have done differently? The youth?
- Do you understand the law in this situation?
- Are there any other questions?

Remind the youth: “If you feel your rights have been violated, this is the procedure to use” and provide police department complaint procedure.

Give final recommendations for how best to handle interaction with the police. If there is time, you can do a reverse role reversal (with police playing police and students playing students) to show how best to do a stop or other interaction.



The youth advisory council members were asked to write up questions they could ask if the dialogue was slow. In this workshop, they asked questions such as:

- What is the difference between a social and a Terry stop?
- Why can an officer stop me in a public space or park?
- Why do officers have people sit down sometimes?
- Do I have to open my backpack if asked?
- What do I do if I feel I have been stopped illegally?
- Just because I smell like marijuana can I be arrested?
- If I get pulled over, what do I do with my hands?

Provide a quick overview of acting skills:

Be seen —Stand on a diagonal and face toward the audience at all times, especially when you speak, even if you normally would face the person with whom you are talking.

Be heard—project your voice so that you can be heard in the back of the room.

Use sound effects!!

Be safe—because you are not trained in stage combat, no stage fighting!



Workshop 2 - "America" (Valuing Differences)

ANITA: "Life can be bright in America"

BERNARDO: "If you can fight in America"

ALL GIRLS: "Life is all right in America"

ALL BOYS: "If you're all white in America"

-from *West Side Story*

Purpose of Workshop: To show what we have in common with those who may seem different than we are and to value differences.

Preparation for Workshop with Officers and Youth Advisory Council:

Use "America" to help youth (and police) recognize their own stereotypes of others, including new immigrants. Perhaps use the workshop first with your youth planning team as a focus group exercise.

Designate at least two facilitators, an adult and a youth, for this workshop at the high school level. Consider having high school youth run this workshop for middle school students.



Youth from White Plains, New York, perform original works based on themes from *West Side Story*.



Workshop Directions:

Watch Scene 11 “America” from *West Side Story* DVD

For those who haven’t seen the film in its entirety, briefly describe the story, or have a participant who has seen the film describe the story (you can also use the story of *Romeo and Juliet* as background). For those who have seen the entire film, what stereotypes do you see and hear in *West Side Story*? In “America”? What negative stereotypes about the Puerto Ricans? The Polish (the Jets)? The police? America itself? Are there any positive stereotypes about the Puerto Ricans? The Polish? The police? America?

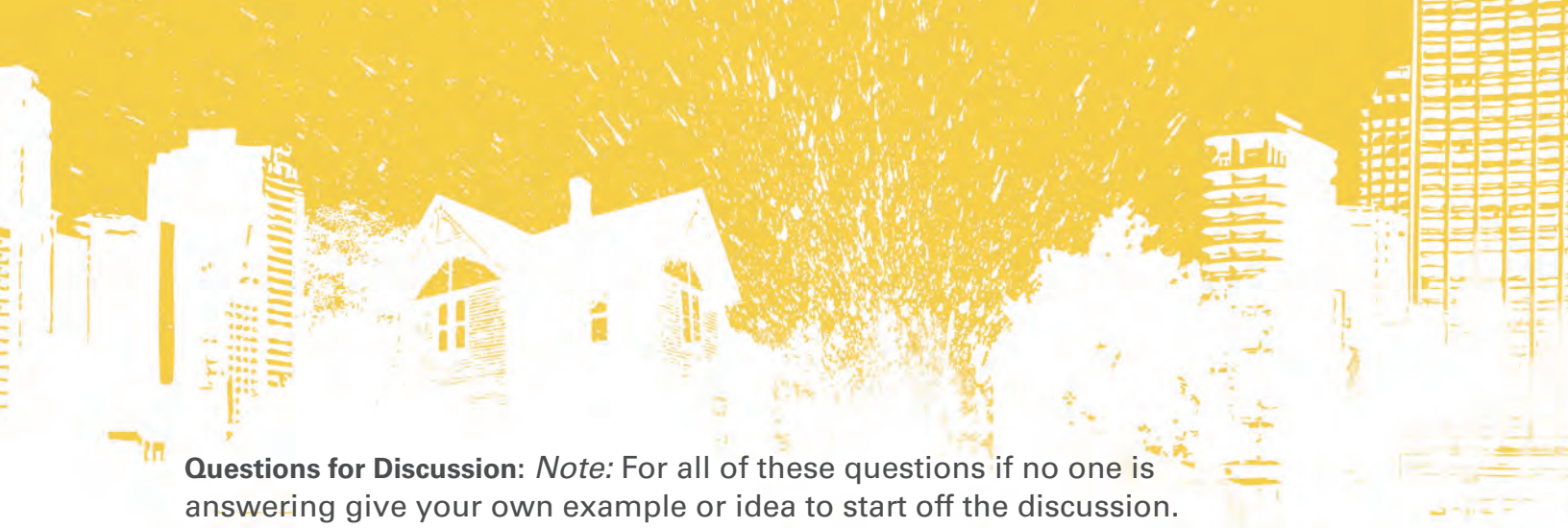
Begin with an icebreaker that shows that we all have similar experiences and have much in common:

Cross the line. Count off by 2’s and then have students stand in 2 lines facing each other. A student facilitator asks a series of questions and after each question students answering “yes” to the question take a step forward and cross the imaginary centerline to the other side and turn and face the new group across the line. Students will observe that both groups will be completely jumbled by the end of the series of questions because we all have similar experiences. You can get as deep as you want with these questions—the more honest the participants have to be, the better the results. After you get people warmed up, if you feel comfortable enough have the participants throw out a few statements. The facilitators should be part of the two groups crossing the line.

Example questions (you can make up your own):

- If you are wearing black, cross the line.
- If you have a younger brother, cross the line.
- If you have ever told a lie, cross the line.
- If you have ever been stopped by a police officer, cross the line.
- If you have a parent or grandparent born in another country, cross the line.
- If you have ever stereotyped someone, cross the line.
- If you have ever felt stereotyped, cross the line.
- If you have ever been a victim of hate, any form of hate, cross the line.
- If you speak a language other than English at home, cross the line.

After you have gone through the statements, have the students discuss some things that surprised them, and give your own examples of things that surprised you.



Questions for Discussion: *Note:* For all of these questions if no one is answering give your own example or idea to start off the discussion.

- What does it mean to stereotype?
- Have you ever been stereotyped?
- What are some of your stereotypes about other people or cultures?
- Give examples: What is the stereotype about blondes? people with a British accent? people who wear glasses? people wearing hoodies and baggy pants?

Have you ever stereotyped someone and then gotten to know them? (Leader should give an example from his or her own experience.)

- Have you ever witnessed stereotyping in your classroom or school? What happened?
- Are there groups at your school who don't get along? Do you know why not?
- Are there groups at school you can't or wouldn't sit with at lunch? Which ones? Why not?
- Who has the power in your school? Are there rivalries? Between what groups?
- Where did your own parents or grandparents come from? What stereotypes of their culture or social status did they face?
- What other cultural or ethnic groups are in your neighborhood? Your school? How do you interact with them?
- Are there things about other cultures that you like?
- Are there things about other cultures you do not understand? Does not understanding other cultures cause stereotypes? Which stereotypes?
- What does it mean to be an American? What is the American dream?
- How do you think new immigrants feel about coming to this country? Do you know any people who have recently immigrated?
- What might you do to help stop stereotyping?



Theater Games

Use a theater game to build understanding of immigrants or those outside the mainstream culture. White Plains, New York, used a theater game called Gibberish Land.


Gibberish Land: Students count off in 4's. Groups 1 and 2 go outside of the classroom with the student leader who briefs these groups that they are families of immigrants to America from the land of GIBBERISH and they speak nothing but Gibberish as a language. One group must secure housing at the Housing Department. The other group must buy groceries at the local grocery store.

Students of group 3 are the Housing Department.

Students of group 4 are the grocery clerks.

Each group must help each other and use any form of communication they can.

Debrief: In the debrief, ask what feelings students in each group had during the interactions. Frustration? Fear? Anger? Compassion? What means did they use to communicate without language? Ask if anyone has been in a situation like this, unable to communicate with someone else. How did that make the person feel?



NOTE OF THANKS: We would like to thank the Wallingford Boys and Girls Club for their assistance in developing this workshop.



Workshop 3 - “Jet Song” (Myths and realities of gangs)

When you’re a Jet,
You’re a Jet all the way
From your first cigarette
To your last dyin’ day.

-from *West Side Story*

Purpose of Workshop: To educate youth about the myths and realities of gangs and gang membership and provide tools to prevent them from joining a gang.

“It informed me about the life of gang members, the consequences of gang life and let me hear real life stories.”

-Student at Seattle Youth Summit

“I learned about the danger of being in a gang and what to do to stay out of gangs.”

-Student at Seattle Youth Summit

Preparation for Workshop with Officers and Youth Advisory Council:

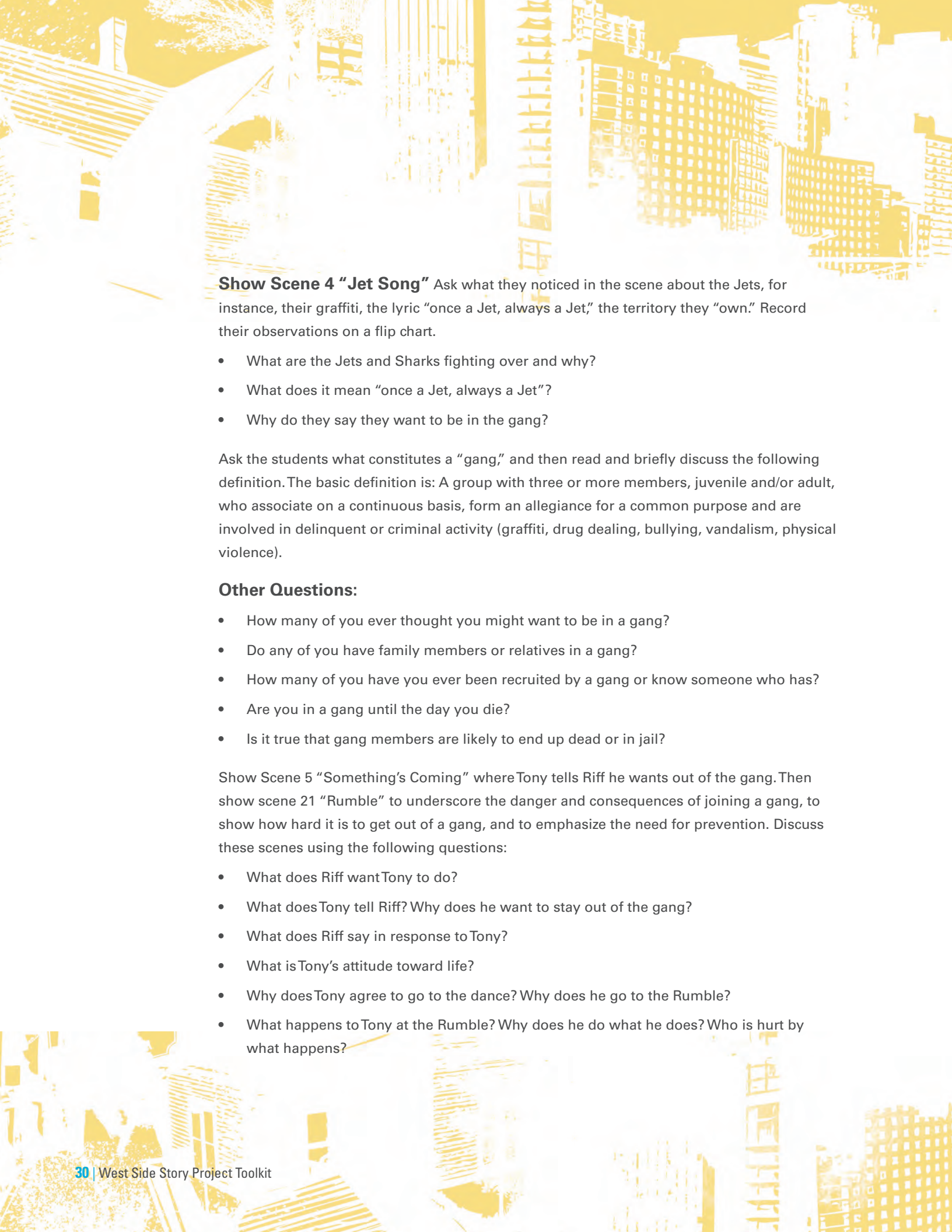
Ask a gang unit officer to lead this workshop, perhaps together with a former gang member who works in the community. Someone who can talk from his or her own experience of being in a gang raises the level of discussion.

Note: This workshop is primarily for prevention rather than for intervention and is not intended for entrenched gang members. The targeted youth for this program are those at risk for recruitment into serious gangs. Also, media presence may discourage open discussion, so consider making this a session closed to media.

Workshop Directions:

Use the “Jet Song” workshop to:

- Dispel myths about gangs
- Discuss what constitutes a gang
- Discuss the history of gangs in your area
- Explain how gangs recruit, including via internet
- Warn that gang membership is not romantic or glamorous, nor is it a healthy support system/family
- Discuss ways to prevent gang membership.



Show Scene 4 “Jet Song” Ask what they noticed in the scene about the Jets, for instance, their graffiti, the lyric “once a Jet, always a Jet,” the territory they “own.” Record their observations on a flip chart.

- What are the Jets and Sharks fighting over and why?
- What does it mean “once a Jet, always a Jet”?
- Why do they say they want to be in the gang?

Ask the students what constitutes a “gang,” and then read and briefly discuss the following definition. The basic definition is: A group with three or more members, juvenile and/or adult, who associate on a continuous basis, form an allegiance for a common purpose and are involved in delinquent or criminal activity (graffiti, drug dealing, bullying, vandalism, physical violence).

Other Questions:

- How many of you ever thought you might want to be in a gang?
- Do any of you have family members or relatives in a gang?
- How many of you have you ever been recruited by a gang or know someone who has?
- Are you in a gang until the day you die?
- Is it true that gang members are likely to end up dead or in jail?

Show Scene 5 “Something’s Coming” where Tony tells Riff he wants out of the gang. Then show scene 21 “Rumble” to underscore the danger and consequences of joining a gang, to show how hard it is to get out of a gang, and to emphasize the need for prevention. Discuss these scenes using the following questions:

- What does Riff want Tony to do?
- What does Tony tell Riff? Why does he want to stay out of the gang?
- What does Riff say in response to Tony?
- What is Tony’s attitude toward life?
- Why does Tony agree to go to the dance? Why does he go to the Rumble?
- What happens to Tony at the Rumble? Why does he do what he does? Who is hurt by what happens?



Provide a Brief Overview of the History of Gangs in General and in Your Area

Example of National Gang History: Different immigrant groups have formed gangs for protection or for illegal economic activity throughout the history of America. Italian, Irish, and Russian immigrants all have established various “mafias” or gangs. In the 1980s in California, Hispanic gangs started growing and separated into the Mexican Mafia/Southern (color blue) and Northern (color red). CRIPS were blue and used the number 13 (M for “Mexican” is 13th letter); Bloods were red and used the number 14 (letter N for “Northern” is 14th letter). Originally, CRIPS stood for Community Revolutionary In Progress and was an African American group formed to better the community that then grew into a gang.

Example of Local Gang History: In Seattle, there are about 250–300 gang groups, but only about 8 of them are violent. Others are just kids trying to be a part of something. Every week a new gang appears as there is frequent splintering off of kids who don’t get along. Most shootings occur between the 100 or so youth involved in those 8 gangs who tend to be much more violent.

Ask them about the gangs they are familiar with—many of them know the terminology and the names—use this time to find out about their knowledge.

Preventing Gang Membership

Preventing gang membership: Use this time to find out about their knowledge of gangs. Make a list of recommendations from their input. Some of the suggestions at the Seattle summit included:

- Easy access to programs
- More programs with police department
- These types of discussions
- Support for families for DV, alcoholism, divorce
- Help for getting out of gangs—make that information easily available.

Warn about gangs advertising themselves on the Internet. Gangs from 1000 miles away advertise in Seattle. The Internet spreads conflicts between ethnic groups and advertises how to get gang-related clothing. MySpace allows you to become something you aren’t: kids create gang member personas to fit in, be a part of something, and they don’t realize what messages they are sending to the serious gangs.

Exiting a gang: Discuss how to get help exiting a gang. In the Seattle WSSP, a youth at one of the summits asked for help getting out of a well-established violent gang. An exit plan for someone who is gang-involved requires working with the youth and his family and with social service providers to develop the decision-making abilities of the youth. It can take 3 to 4 years get out of a serious gang unless residence is changed. A week might be sufficient for a weak, small gang or clique. Let youth know where they can find help if needed.

Theater Games


Self-identification

Purpose: This game is particularly useful with teens when dealing with sensitive issues such as peer pressure, substance use, and bullying. Participants are always surprised at who stands up to claim the statements as their own, and a sense of solidarity is quickly established.

Everyone sits in chairs in a circle. One person stands in the center (there is no chair for the middle person). The middle person says something that is true about him or herself, for example, "I have blue eyes." Everyone in the circle who has blue eyes then must stand up and find an empty chair. The one person who is without a seat is now the middle person, who must say something true about himself: "I have a cat." All cat owners then stand up and try to find a new chair.



Seattle WSSP Youth Advisory Council members Kelsey Graves and Colin Hartman.



The longer you let the game go, the more interesting it becomes. The initial statements will likely be silly and shallow, but after several minutes, people have to start thinking harder about what to say. The facilitator can also direct the group to focus on a specific topic. For example, if the group is examining the topic of “communication,” participants can say things like, “I told a lie this week,” “I call my mother every day,” or “I’m afraid of speaking in public.” Other possible statements that would reflect the scenes in *West Side Story*:

- I have hit someone in anger.
- I have intimidated someone to make them do what I want.
- I have beat up someone to defend someone else.
- I have run away from a fight.

Scenarios of Conflict

Purpose: A role-play to get youth thinking about options for resolving conflict.

If it is a fairly small group (under 25), give each group of four or five students a specific scenario and have them create an improvisation on a situation where the desire to stay on track or out of the ‘fight’ is conflicted with someone or something you love being threatened or hurt. The scenario might also consist of insults and injustice by a bullying force. There could be an inner voice (played by another student) that tries to keep them out of the fight and a voice that convinces them to jump into it. Start them off with a few lines of dialogue that set a conflict and let them improvise forward from there. Situations to consider using:

- Hearing someone making fun of you or your friend
- Someone is “moving in” on your girlfriend or boyfriend
- Someone “grills” you
- Someone has been saying things about you behind your back.

Then have them discuss the consequences of various reactions. Perhaps use a paper flip chart and write in one column “reactions” and in another column “consequences.”

Resources for information on gangs:

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov

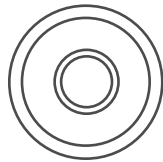
National Gang Center www.nationalgangcenter.gov



Summit Evaluation

At each summit, evaluations were distributed to students. Group leaders encouraged students to complete each section of the evaluation after each workshop, and students were able to participate in a raffle for an iPod as an incentive for turning in their evaluation sheets.

Consider asking a local university or college to assist in compiling and analyzing the evaluation data.



SEE SAMPLE EVALUATION FORM ON DATA CD.

“I found much truth in the movie Mean Girls. Maybe it was slightly exaggerated, but when I saw the map of the lunchroom it could not have been more spot on. If you walk into the lunchroom of my high school you can see the Asians, the jocks, the band geeks, the theater geeks, the black kids, the Filipino kids, the nerds and cool nerds all sitting at their own tables. And when I walked into the lunch area of the summit I found something very similar: all of the tables were segregated by school and within schools there were different tables for different groups. After seeing this, the WSSP Youth Advisory Council leadership decided to mix things up and we all sat together. Some stragglers from different schools started sitting together after seeing us change and realizing that it really was okay to mix. I know it was small, but seeing that small change in what we were before the program started, a group of strangers afraid to mingle, and what we became, friends, was something really special. It showed to me that the goal of awareness really did work.”

– Anna Bennett, Seattle WSSP Youth Advisory Council

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“One student actually approached an officer and told him that he did not want to participate in a gang anymore, that he wanted out. I thought that was pretty cool—we got to somebody.”

—Roxie Torres, Seattle WSSP Youth Advisory Council



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WEST SIDE PROJECT

PLANNING THE ARTISTIC PERFORMANCE



West Side Story Project Toolkit: Crime Prevention on a New Stage

Produced By: U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

Authors: Pamela Beal, Ph.D. and Liza Comtois

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Overview of the Artistic Component

Whether from the streets of Verona, Italy, New York’s West Side, or neighborhoods across your city, youth sometimes fall in love with the wrong people, defend their friendships with their lives, question authority, and challenge adult assumptions about their relationships and ideas of what is best for them. The Artistic Performance Component of the West Side Story Project will explore these ideas in workshops and dialogue culminating in a public performance of students’ original works based on themes from *West Side Story* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

The purpose of the artistic component of the West Side Story Project is to help participating youth create art out of their life experiences that resonates with the themes of these plays.

The goal of the artistic component is to offer all participating youth the following key experiences:

- An understanding of the relationship between *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* and the concept of the universal story
- Opportunities to engage in honest dialogue about the themes of the project and how the participants see them expressed in their lives, school, neighborhood, and city
- Development of tools for the artistic expression of their own life experiences—love, friendship, and navigating the path to adulthood—through a variety of creative means including dance, music, poetry, and playwriting
- An appreciation for the value of art as an effective tool of communication
- Positive interactions with adults and authority figures including police officers, teachers, actors, teaching artists, and special guests
- A chance to perform their original work for an audience of their family, peers, and community.



Resources and Recruitment

Resources Needed

Teaching Artists (2 Per Group of Youth): Working with professional teaching artists is the key to the success of this project. If you are working with a theater partner, they will probably have a roster of artists with whom they work. If not, a great resource to find these artists is your community's Arts Council or Commission.

Teaching artists should be familiar with how to engage youth in theater games and workshops that can open them up to authentic expression, build trust among the groups, and engage their imaginations in both improvisation and performance¹. Project planners should be open to their input. Work like this is often not about following a set plan or formula but interacting with youth, reading them, and finding what works with them. As one teaching artist said, "trust the process and you find the map as you go."

Locations for Meetings should have large open rooms with minimal furniture and a clean floor (carpet is ideal). Youth will be participating in group activities that can be physical as well as in round-table dialogue so space versatility is crucial.

DVD Player and Monitor are needed to show youth scenes from *West Side Story* and *Romeo and Juliet* as part of the dialogue sessions. A CD player may be needed for music incorporated into a performance.

Some drama exercises need additional materials such as large pieces of paper and markers for writing/drawing. Consult with your teaching artists. As the performances take shape, costumes and props may be needed. Resources for these things can come from the partner theater, school drama programs, or community theaters in your area.

Recruitment of Youth

Youth (about 10-15 per group) participants can have any level of experience in theater. They can be drama students, a basketball team, an advisory council, or a mix of youth recruited from the summits or from affiliated schools and/or community centers.

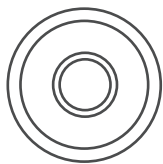
¹. Additional recommended resources are *Theater Game File* and *Theatre Games for the Classroom* by Viola Spolin.



Suggestions for Recruitment

- Pass out flyers at summits in packets youth receive and/or send an email to youth participants.
- Include interactive drama games during summit workshops to raise student interest in the performance component.
- Have your teaching artists attend the summits and include them in developing one of the workshops to give it a theater focus. Youth will then have a sense of how they could see themselves participating in the component piece even if they don't have performance experience.
- Have the teaching artists and a member of the summit planning team visit school drama programs, after school clubs, sports teams, or student council meetings to generate interest in participating.
- Visit area youth centers with members of your teen advisory council and have them talk to other youth about the project.
- Offer incentives to youth for their participation. Opportunities to work with professional actors and to attend professional theater rehearsals, performances and backstage tours (if they can be arranged) are all possible at no cost to the project. If the budget permits, modest stipends for participation could be offered.

Have youth complete a "Performance Release and Contract" to ensure that they and their parents understand the scope of commitment the project requires.




SEE SAMPLE WSSP PERFORMANCE RELEASE AND CONTRACT ON CD.



Seattle WSSP youth perform a scene from *Romeo and Juliet*.

Other Suggestions

- Find meeting places and set times that are convenient for youth.
- For easier scheduling, target a group of youth who already meet at a regular time to avoid having to schedule a special time. For instance, meet during a drama class at a high school or meet at a community center at a time the youth regularly attend (e.g., after basketball practice).
- If you work with youth from a variety of schools and programs, they will benefit from meeting and interacting with one another. But it can be difficult to coordinate schedules for this project and to keep them motivated to attend. Be prepared to make reminder calls, to provide transportation, and to have snacks available during your sessions to encourage attendance.
- Some youth have acting experience, but most probably do not. Teaching artists may have to adjust the level of performance according to students' backgrounds. In Seattle, one of the groups was comprised primarily of drama students while another was comprised primarily of girls' basketball team members. The expectations for each group were obviously different, but they were able to perform together in the final event as each group brought different strengths to their performances.

- 
- Sessions run from 1½ to 2 hours until performance time when extra time may be needed to rehearse. The number of sessions will be based on what type of performance you choose to create. Trust your teaching artists to let you know how much time they will need.
 - Be clear with students about the time commitment and expectations regarding participation level, attendance, and being on time.

Ideas for the First Sessions

Theater Games

Theater games are interactive. They warm up the body and voice and they build community. Using them also lays in a conceptual understanding of how an actor works and teaches youth about movement, voice projection, and eye contact. Below are some suggested games to help you get started with your project:

Name Game: The participants sit or stand in a circle. The leader says, “We are having a party, and everyone has to bring something for the party that begins with the same first letter as their name. My name is JANINE, and I am bringing a bag of JELLYBEANS.” The person to the leader’s right says his name and item, and then repeats the leader’s name and item: “My name is ERIK, I am going to bring EGG SALAD. This is JANINE, who is bringing JELLYBEANS.” Each person in turn introduces himself, announces their item, and repeats the name and item of everyone who preceded them. This means that the last person has to remember everyone in the group, or at least try. The leader should encourage others to help out when participants get stuck on someone’s name or item, with verbal or pantomimed clues.

Zip-Zap-Zop: Everyone stands in a circle. One person quickly claps and points at another, while saying “zip.” The person who received the “zip” then claps and points at another, while saying “zap.” That person then claps and points to someone while saying “zop.” The pattern continues, “zip, zap, zop, zip, zap, zop.” The goal is to pass the words and energy around as quickly as possible, which is harder than it seems.

Word Ball: Everyone stands in a circle. A category is chosen, like food, sports, animals, etc. One player starts by tossing a word that goes with the chosen theme (such as “apple”) to another player while making eye contact. The receiver then tosses another word (“orange”), and throws it to yet another player. This can be used as an elimination game. If a word gets tossed to someone who doesn’t have a word to toss, the person is eliminated and must make a flamboyant bow and step out of the game.


Clapping Pass: The group stands in a circle and someone starts by turning and facing the person to their right. Once they have the attention of that person, the two will clap simultaneously. Then that person turns to the right and claps simultaneously with the person to the right and the clap is passed around the circle. The goal is to get a fast steady rhythm going. You can add complication by passing another clap to the left while one is traveling to the right.



Seattle 5th Avenue Theatre production of *West Side Story*: "America."

Discussion

Once the group has warmed up, begin a dialogue about *West Side Story* and its connection to *Romeo and Juliet* and their universal themes. Have students already familiar with the story give a recap. If time permits, watch videos or selected scenes of both. You can also read selected scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* aloud, answering questions about what words and passages mean and highlighting Shakespeare's use of metaphor and simile. Or read the lyrics from songs in *West Side Story* such as "America" or "Officer Krupke" or "A Boy Like That." Ask students how the ideas in *West Side Story* scenes can be found in *Romeo and Juliet*.



Different groups of students will respond to different parts or different themes in a scene. First meetings are about sensing what scenes they respond to and which universal themes resonate with them.

Possible scenes from *West Side Story* to show (and their equivalents in *Romeo and Juliet*):

<i>West Side Story</i>	<i>Romeo & Juliet</i>
Jet Song	Act I, Scene 1 or Act I, Scene 3
Something's Coming	
Dance at the Gym	Act I, Scene 5
America	
Tonight (balcony scene)	Act II, Scene 2
The Rumble	Act III, Scene 1
A Boy Like That	
Officer Krupke (balcony scene)	
Cool (balcony scene)	


Possible discussion questions to help determine what scenes youth might wish to work with in the sessions and for the performance pieces:

- What are the similarities between the two films/stories?
- What modern situations are similar to the situations in each film/story?
- What in a particular scene (or scenes) relates to your life?

Discussion Questions for Particular Scenes:

"The Capulet Party" (Act I, Scene 5) in *Romeo and Juliet* or "Dance at the Gym" from *West Side Story* and the balcony scenes from both *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* can be used to discuss the power of love to override prejudice or peer pressure or the challenge of having friends from a different culture or even a different school group.

- Who wouldn't you be able to bring home?
- Who wouldn't your parents want you to date?
- Who wouldn't your friends want you to hang out with or date?



Following this discussion, pair youth with someone they don't know and have them play Act 1, Scene 5 from *Romeo and Juliet*.

"America" can be used to discuss the problem of prejudice, and the difficulties of being an immigrant or newcomer.

- What does prejudice look like?
- What is America? What does it mean to be an American?
- What do you think about race in America?
- What constitutes a family in *West Side Story*?

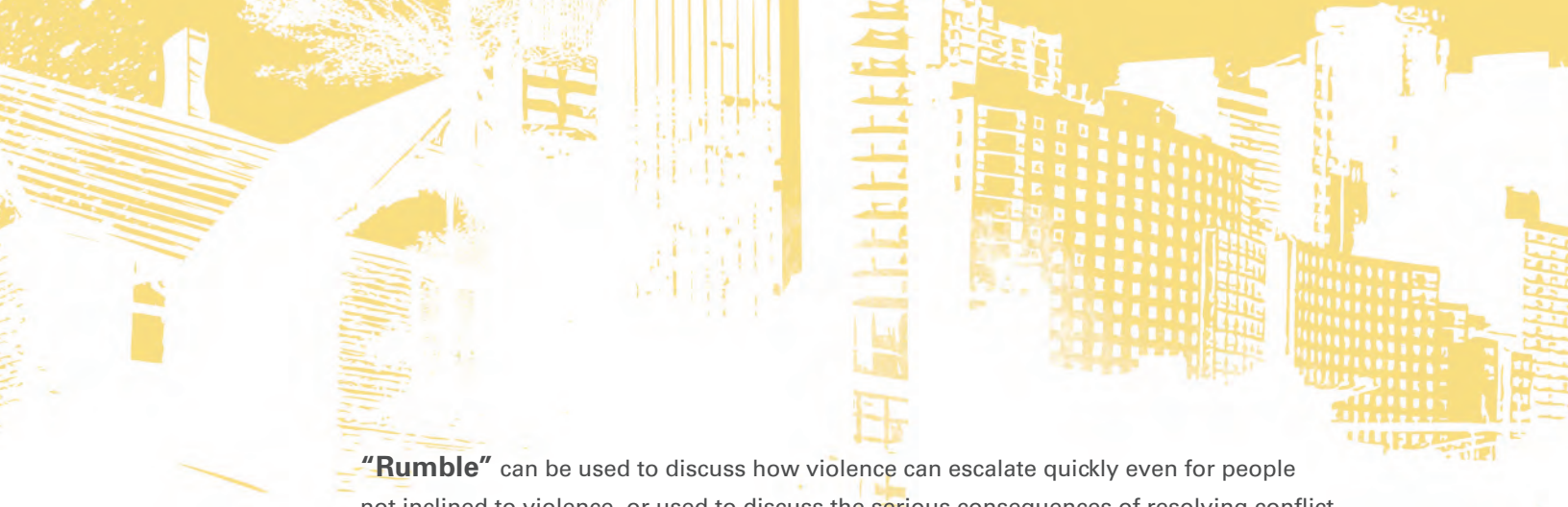
A theater game called a tableau can serve to illustrate the ideas and themes you are discussing:

Tableau: One group of 5 or 6 students creates a tableau, a human three-dimensional photograph that conveys a particular image or idea. For instance, after viewing "America" the youth can make a tableau of prejudice or of a particular cultural stereotype, then the rest of the group guesses what the tableau is saying. Groups creating the tableau can be encouraged to use stereotypes to provoke responses from the group, like an African American youth holding a White youth who is down on the ground. The group guessing will often say the African American youth beat up the White youth but actually the tableau could be about the African American youth trying to revive the White youth after he fainted.

"Jet Song" can be used to discuss what it means to be a family, what a gang provides to youth, how to respond to conflict, or what causes violence between groups of youth. In the White Plains WSSP (New York) performance, students and police re-created and choreographed the opening fight scene of *Romeo and Juliet* that shows conflict erupting over a mere gesture.

"Something's Coming" can be used to discuss growing up, looking forward to a better life, leaving friends, and growing out of an "old" life.

"Officer Krupke" might be used with at-risk youth to talk about any experiences they might have had with the juvenile justice system or how they feel they are perceived by others and by society.



“Rumble” can be used to discuss how violence can escalate quickly even for people not inclined to violence, or used to discuss the serious consequences of resolving conflict through violence.

This process of dialogue and theater games can be as valuable as the production itself. The conversations and processes that lead to the production may be the most memorable part of the project for the youth. In one case in Seattle, the production was limited because the youth had little drama experience and time was short, but the conversations held during the sessions were animated and energetic, covering hot topics and current political issues as well as getting the youth to “play” together in a positive, collaborative, and imaginative way. Again, talent and theater experience are not what is most important in these sessions or in the creation of the performance. The purpose of the performance is to create art out of their life experiences that resonate with the themes of these plays. That is what Shakespeare did and what the creators of *West Side Story* did. Youth need to know they can do it as well.

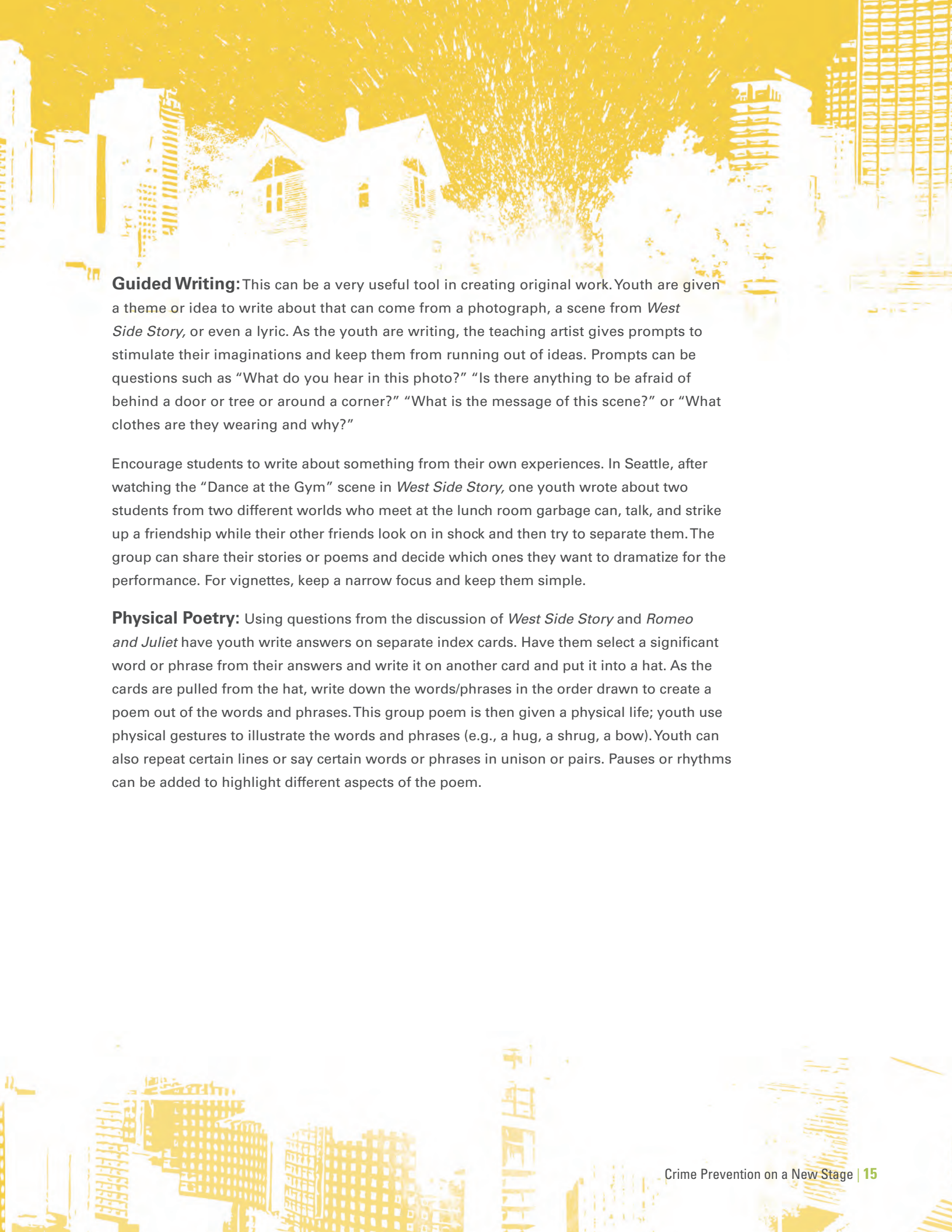
Ideas for Developing the Performance

There are many ways to develop work for original performance. Your teaching artists will certainly have suggestions. Below are some examples of the techniques used to create the performance pieces in Seattle.

Replay Theater: This process works well with students with little or no theatrical experience. It draws on students’ own lives to create the story. One youth volunteers to tell a story from his/her own life that reflects the themes the group has discussed. This youth acts as the narrator of his or her own story while the other students act as the chorus, taking on the roles of characters or even props in the story.



SEE “TEACHING ARTIST” INTERVIEW ON THE ACCOMPANYING DVD.



Guided Writing: This can be a very useful tool in creating original work. Youth are given a theme or idea to write about that can come from a photograph, a scene from *West Side Story*, or even a lyric. As the youth are writing, the teaching artist gives prompts to stimulate their imaginations and keep them from running out of ideas. Prompts can be questions such as “What do you hear in this photo?” “Is there anything to be afraid of behind a door or tree or around a corner?” “What is the message of this scene?” or “What clothes are they wearing and why?”

Encourage students to write about something from their own experiences. In Seattle, after watching the “Dance at the Gym” scene in *West Side Story*, one youth wrote about two students from two different worlds who meet at the lunch room garbage can, talk, and strike up a friendship while their other friends look on in shock and then try to separate them. The group can share their stories or poems and decide which ones they want to dramatize for the performance. For vignettes, keep a narrow focus and keep them simple.

Physical Poetry: Using questions from the discussion of *West Side Story* and *Romeo and Juliet* have youth write answers on separate index cards. Have them select a significant word or phrase from their answers and write it on another card and put it into a hat. As the cards are pulled from the hat, write down the words/phrases in the order drawn to create a poem out of the words and phrases. This group poem is then given a physical life; youth use physical gestures to illustrate the words and phrases (e.g., a hug, a shrug, a bow). Youth can also repeat certain lines or say certain words or phrases in unison or pairs. Pauses or rhythms can be added to highlight different aspects of the poem.



The Artistic Performance

Location: The performance should be held in a theatrical space with good acoustics. The performances can vary widely, from a simple sharing of short scenes and poems for friends and family to a big production with sound, lights, and costumes. The place you choose should reflect the performance you are presenting and fit the expected audience size.


Rehearsals: If you choose to do a full-length performance as was done in White Plains, New York, (theirs ran about an hour and 15 minutes), consider having students and their parents complete a commitment contract (see below). Scheduling rehearsals for large numbers of people can be particularly difficult. Consider creating a detailed schedule that gives exact times and locations of practices with contact information for the teaching artists conducting the rehearsals. SEE ALSO: “Intellectual Property Issues” in Book 2: Partners & Resources for information on use of *West Side Story* and its music and lyrics.

Promoting the Performance

You will need a plan to promote the event. This could include flyers, posters, press releases, public service announcements, and if you have the budget, advertisements in local newspapers. Perhaps contact your local public access channel to see if they would tape the program to broadcast. See sample flyer used for the White Plains, New York performance below.

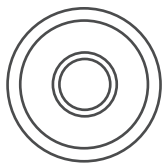
You will also need to determine if you will need to ticket the event. If so, determine who will take reservations, if it will be assigned seating or general admission, where to pick up tickets, etc. Also consider your VIP guest list of key individuals involved in the project or project sponsors. Do you want to give them time to say something before, during, or after the performance? Where will they be seated?

If you decide to hold a performance that is likely to attract a large audience, it would be very helpful to work with a theater partner familiar with producing large events. They will be able to take care of most aspects of the production as well as assist with lighting, sound and any other technical elements to the performance. A smaller performance won't require all of these details, but do create some promotional materials such as flyers to gain a wider audience and convey support for the performance. Also, a VIP guest list should be created even for smaller events.



A program listing all participants can be created for the event as well. White Plains also distributed “goody bags” to their audience with information about their project and a CD of poetry and music created by WSSP youth. In addition, consider holding an “after performance” gathering for your VIPs and those who planned the event. White Plains also held a debrief and celebration party for all participants a few weeks after the performance.

If you plan to tape the performance, be sure to get signed releases for the use of the tape for not-for-profit, educational purposes only from the parents of any youth under 18. If possible, get releases from those 18 and older as well.



SEE SAMPLE WSSP PERFORMANCE RELEASE AND CONTRACT ON CD.

**It's all in the words, the music,
the rhythm and the rhyme...**

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in partnership with the

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**A national project for youth to artistically
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"[My father] would be so thrilled to know that *West Side Story* is being used in this new way to reach out to communities and to kids in trouble." –Jamie Bernstein, daughter of Leonard Bernstein



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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE



PLANNING THE COMMUNITY FORUM



West Side Story Project Toolkit: Crime Prevention on a New Stage

Produced By: U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

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“The West Side Story Project allows you to engage your community in a way that is both meaningful and entertaining and that has the ability to shape and change the way the world functions.” –Bill Berry, Associate Artistic Director of the Seattle 5th Avenue Theatre

Community Forum on Youth Violence

Many cities and towns have organizations that provide forums for public discussion of important issues for our communities. Such forums and town halls are often held at universities or colleges or at libraries or other public buildings. As part of the West Side Story Project (WSSP) in Seattle, an organization called Town Hall Seattle (www.townhallseattle.org) provided the venue for a community forum on youth violence to which the public was invited. Such a forum can be held independently of any of the other aspects of the WSSP.



A SEGMENT OF THE SEATTLE TOWN HALL YOUTH VIOLENCE COMMUNITY FORUM “JETS AND SHARKS 50 YEARS LATER: A CONVERSATION ABOUT YOUTH VIOLENCE AND PREVENTION” IS AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING ON THE ACCOMPANYING DVD.

TO VIEW THE FORUM IN ITS ENTIRETY, GO TO WWW.SEATTLECHANNEL.ORG AND DO A VIDEO SEARCH FOR “WEST SIDE STORY PROJECT.”

Purpose of the Forum:

The forum is designed to engage the community at large in a discussion about what is known in relation to the problems of youth violence in your area, the current research about the factors that place youth at risk for violence, and the protective factors that can prevent youth from engaging in a life of violence. The forum can also discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the police in addressing youth violence and the role of the juvenile justice system, in partnership with other community-based organizations, to serve as a catalyst for change. The idea is to “replicate” the characters in the *West Side Story* song “Gee, Officer Krupke” (i.e., the judge, the police officer, the social worker, and the psychiatrist)

with prominent, real-life practitioners who can address the issues facing youth and the helping systems with which they interact. The forum can also provide an opportunity to briefly discuss the conceptualization of *West Side Story* and why it remains a quintessential American musical more than 50 years later.



Performance of "Officer Krupke" by the 5th Avenue Theatre troupe at the Seattle Town Hall forum.



What Seattle Did


In the WSSPTown Hall in Seattle, nontraditional messengers sang an unexpected song: musical theater became an unexpected voice for community policing and violence prevention, and the police became a voice for the power of theater in reaching youth. The Town Hall forum began with a brief introduction to *West Side Story* by David Armstrong, Artistic Director of the 5th Avenue Theatre, followed by a performance by 5th Avenue cast members of the harshly cynical song “Gee, Officer Krupke” (from *West Side Story*) excerpted below.

Dear kindly Sergeant Krupke,
You gotta understand,
It’s just our bringin’ up-ke
That gets us out of hand.
Our mothers all are junkies,
Our fathers all are drunks.
Golly Moses, natcherly we’re punks!

Gee, Officer Krupke, we’re very upset;
We never had the love that ev’ry child oughta get.
We ain’t no delinquents,
We’re misunderstood.
Deep down inside us there is good !

For the full lyrics of “Gee, Officer Krupke,” see the official *West Side Story* website: www.westsidestory.com.

The lyrics of “Gee, Officer Krupke” provide an excellent starting point for a community-wide dialogue on the complexity of issues facing at-risk youth and the multiple systems that deal with them. In Seattle, the panel was moderated by Dr. Hubert Locke, retired dean of the University of Washington Medical School. The dialogue was focused on stepping outside the individual organizational/professional safety zones and taking on these issues in partnership. If the societal problem of youth violence is complex and steeped in psychological, educational, and parenting issues (among others), then law enforcement agencies and their partners in preventing youth violence need to engage in early and constant prevention activities. The panel members represented various aspects of the criminal justice system, reflecting the characters in “Gee, Officer Krupke,” and they had name recognition within the local community to draw an audience for the event.

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- Seattle Police Officer Adrian Diaz spoke about the emotional/behavioral issues of youth, including undiagnosed youth with ADHD who end up as “gang wanna-be’s” and the changes in gangs in the past 50 years.
 - Dr. Eric Trupin of the University of Washington talked about the social-psychological research on risk and resiliency, concluding that while we know a great deal about what is going on with youth, our public policy has often not supported evidence-based programs that clearly work.
 - Former Seattle Police Chief Gil Kerlikowske talked about why it is important for police to focus on prevention rather than “sticking to the knitting” and doing only what they have always done. He emphasized that police agencies need to look beyond what is comfortable for them (law enforcement) and become engaged with people like Dr. Trupin, with projects like this one, and in supporting early childhood programs that seek to give children a healthy foundation for life.
 - Former Washington State Supreme Court Justice Bobbe Bridge, founder and president of the Center for Children and Youth Justice, an organization working to improve the juvenile justice system statewide (www.ccyj.org), spoke about initiatives to revamp and rethink the youth justice system.

John Jay College Symposium

In November 2007, as part of a celebration of the 50th Anniversary of *West Side Story*, John Jay College (located only a few blocks from the area of Hell’s Kitchen in New York City where the musical was filmed) held a symposium “*West Side Story: Perspectives from the Street*.” Dr. Dana Tarantino organized the symposium, which was moderated by Dr. Ellen Scrivner, former director of John Jay’s Leadership Academy. Participants in the symposium included faculty members at John Jay College who were experts in their respective fields of juvenile justice and Latino studies. Topics included the impact of *West Side Story* on the Latino community, Latino perspectives on the play, Latino cast members’ responses to the musical, and discussions of present day gang culture in the Hell’s Kitchen area.



Planning the Forum

Suggestions

One of the key parts of planning a forum includes selecting a host site. Some suggestions include a university or college, a local library, or another public building with appropriate seating. You should take into account public accessibility so that the site is easy to find and to enter. Other helpful tips for planning the forum include the following:

- Select a panel moderator, perhaps a professor from a local college or university or someone from the local media.
- Meet with the moderator and a leader of the host organization to plan the program. Planning should include creating a theme such as Seattle’s “Jets and Sharks 50 Years Later,” identifying the panel members, and developing questions for the panel.
- Decide how to have “Gee, Officer Krupke” delivered at the forum: if possible, have live actors perform the song or arrange to have the scene from *West Side Story* played on a large screen. If neither of these is possible, have the lyrics read aloud and/or reproduced for the audience.
- Discuss marketing and outreach efforts as well as cost, if any, of the event. Consider asking local businesses to sponsor the event to cover your costs and to reduce or eliminate any admission fees. Ask the WSSP partners (police, theater, community organizations) to produce a joint press release for the event.
- Provide refreshments. In Seattle, Town Hall provided light refreshments during the event and allowed the WSSP organizers to sell T-shirts, water bottles, and other WSSP items to raise money for the project.
- Consider asking your local public access channel to tape your event. In Seattle, the local public access channel (www.seattlechannel.org) recorded the event, broadcast the original panel discussion, and then broadcast the event periodically during the 3-week run of *West Side Story* at the 5th Avenue Theatre.
- Prior to the forum, the WSSP coordinators should call each of the panel participants to discuss the project, provide them with the proposed format and possible questions, and work with them to develop their opening comments. Immediately before the event, the panel and the WSSP coordinators should meet to review the evening’s activities.

The Forum Program

Ask a well-known local figure to welcome the audience and introduce the program. Perhaps ask a theater partner to provide a brief history of *West Side Story* and its importance to the American Musical Theater and to highlight the enduring relevance of its themes today. If possible, have a local theater group perform the song “Gee, Officer Krupke,” show the scene from *West Side Story*, or have the lyrics read aloud. Finally, introduce your panel and moderator. The panel can answer a moderator’s questions for about 45 minutes and then take questions from the audience.



Seattle Town Hall forum panelists (left to right) Dr. Eric Trupin, former SPD Chief Gil Kerlikowske, SPD Officer Adrian Diaz, Honorable Bobbe Bridge and moderator Dr. Hubert Locke.



Possible Questions for The Panel

What is the real scope of gangs in our community?

How has the way courts address juveniles changed over the past 50 years?

The lyrics of “Officer Krupke” raise the issue of nature versus nurture. What part do nature and nurture have in forming our youth?

There is much finger-pointing at parents in “Officer Krupke.” What role does parenting have in the problem of youth violence?

What about the modern notion that parents should not use corporal punishment?

What is different and what remains the same about gangs today as opposed to those at the time of *West Side Story*?

Why do youth seek out gangs as families?

What is the cost of incarcerating youth versus putting resources into early intervention?

How do learning disabilities contribute to the problem of youth involvement in the juvenile justice system?

From 1957 to the present day, what have been the gains and losses in helping youth? What kinds of interventions work? Why aren’t they implemented more?

What effect does violence in the media and video games have on youth violence?

How much effect has immigration had on the problem of gangs?

Can assigning more police officers to work with youth and community help?

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“The way that people wanted to engage in a dialogue...made me have hope, which is what *West Side Story* is about, hope, that we don't have to live this way, that there is a place for us.”

—Bill Berry, Associate Artistic Director of the Seattle 5th Avenue Theatre



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