



Artists in Neighborhoods Pilot CMSM Early Years Advisory Committee

Alex Madjercic, Manager – Early Years, City of Hamilton

Victoria Long, Program/Operations Director, Arts For All

Patricia Raso, Early Years Senior Research Advisor, City of Hamilton



**A charitable organization of the
Hamilton Conservatory for the Arts.**

**Since 1999, Arts For All has created
access to arts for children and youth
with innovative quality arts programs.**

Create
Arts Access
For All

Connect
Artists to
Communities

Inspire
Arts Every Day,
Everywhere, for
Everyone

Artists in Neighborhoods



Program Overview

The purpose of **the Artists in Neighborhoods** Pilot is to bring art-based activities to targeted Hamilton neighborhoods experiencing a rise in behavioral concerns.

10 Sites

9 Organizations

9
Neighborhoods

9 Artists

84 Educators

450+ children

**1,200+ hours of
programming**

Methods

A **mixed-methods approach** was implemented across 8 sites. This approach allows findings to be validated across the perspectives of educators, artists, and Special Needs Resourcing partners.

- 33 educator surveys
- 9 artist surveys
- 15 focus group participants
- Collection of children's artwork
- SNR Partner Interview
- Review of Serious Occurrence data (2023–2025)



Key Outcomes

Improved Engagement

Educators observed increased participation among children, especially those who typically avoid engaging in classroom activities.

Calmer Behaviours

Children developed habits of patience, turn-taking, and self-regulation.

Emotional Regulation

78% of educators reported improvements in the classroom environment.

Educator Connections

81% of educators reported improved connections with children who show challenging behaviors.

"We have a group of boys who were very active, very rambunctious, very loud, very rough and tumble... The first Wednesday, that entire group of boys was at the table, and we were all astonished." – Educator, School Aged Care

"When they are engaged with art, [we saw] less and less behavioral [challenge] and just a sense of being proud of themselves. We see less [challenging] behaviors."- Educator, School Aged Care

**"[We] were able to engage more with children who had challenging behaviors... There was an extra set of hands in the room."
– Educator, Preschool**

Impact for Educators

Integration of Art

Educators incorporated new art-based practices and created ongoing art stations.

New Skills

57% reported developing new skills to address challenging behaviors.

Confidence

90% plan to integrate more creative approaches.

Support

Educators valued the presence of artists, allowing more 1-to-1 attention for children needing support.



Classroom Environment & Collaboration

- Educators praised artists as collaborative, respectful, and responsive to classroom routines.
- Artists cited strong rapport and relationship-building with educators as the most successful element.



**"I was excited that [the artist] became a member of our team."
– Educator, School-Aged Care**

Extending Impact to Families

- Children carried their enthusiasm home. Many sites hosted public art showcases, drawing high participation.

**"We had a big art show. Over 70 families came, and they got to do hands on art with the children."
– Educator, School Aged Care**

Special Needs Resourcing Partners

- Community Living Hamilton observed that artists provided meaningful classroom support, reducing educator burnout.
- Partners highlighted the strength of universal programming: art supported all children, not just those with identified needs.
- Collaboration between Community Living Hamilton and Arts for All staff was noted as a program strength, though communication could be improved.



Quantitative Impact: Serious Occurrences

While multiple factors contributed to the decline (including Special Needs Resourcing supports), stakeholders agree that the Artist in the Neighborhood program played a role in reducing behavioral incidents.

- **2023: 11 Serious Occurrences** related to children leaving classrooms unsupervised
- **2024: reduced to 5 incidents**
- **2025 (mid-year): 1 incident**



Recommendations

Based on evaluation findings, the following are recommended:

Strengthen Communication

Ensure all educators, artists, and partners are clear on program goals and roles, with orientation provided at the outset.

Deepen Collaboration

Create opportunities for artists, educators, and Resource Consultants to plan together.

Expand Access

Identify new sites and neighborhoods with elevated behavioral concerns for future programming.

Recognize Universal Value

Position Artist in the Neighborhood as a system-wide strategy, given its broad benefits for children, educators, families, and community partners.

Conclusion

The **Artist in the Neighborhood** Pilot has demonstrated strong impacts in Hamilton's Early Years system.

- Children are more engaged and better regulated
- Educators are more confident and creative
- Families are more connected
- Community partnerships are strengthened
- Serious Occurrence data shows a decline in behavioral incidents since the program's launch.

Overall, the evaluation provides evidence that the Artist in the Neighborhood Pilot universal strategy for supporting children's social-emotional well-being and addressing challenging behaviors across Hamilton's early years system.

Next Steps for Hamilton's Early Years System





Hamilton

THANK YOU

Appendix A: List of Artists in Neighborhoods Sites

Organization	Site
BGC Hamilton-Halton	Prince of Wales
BGC Hamilton-Halton	Queen Mary
HWCCCC	St. Patrick's
St. Matthew's House	St. Matthew's Children Centre & Adelaide Hoodless (fall only)
Today's Family	Franklin Road
Umbrella	Cathy Wever
YWCA	Ottawa St. Child Care
Red Hill Family Centre	Red Hill Family Centre
Wesley	Dr. Davey
YMCA	Queen Victoria