Building a youth artist community, brick by brick

Our Mission Statement:
LEGO Art is the development and continuation of after-school art activities that address the decrease of government funding of youth art programs within Chicago. The purpose of LEGO Art is to promote art and provide recognition for socioeconomic minority youth groups by creating an environment in which children can express their creativity in a new and emerging field of art using LEGO bricks as the medium. LEGO Art would serve as an alternate outlet for the children, as opposed to other negative influences such as drugs, gangs, and violence.

Problem

Budget Cuts
- Illinois Arts Council’s budget has been declining. As of FY2010, the IAC budget is cut down by 60% compared to its budget 10 years ago.

Drugs and Negative Influences
- There are currently 106 gang in Chicago, while there are only 19 nonprofit art organizations
- In a survey done by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Preventions
  - 38% of Chicago teens are currently drinking
  - 22% of Chicago teens are using marijuana

Single Parents
- Social scientists have found that common problems arise in single parent families including:
  - Extreme poverty
  - Less supervision of children
  - Increased chances of children dropping out of school

Background

This program provides a possible solution and an outlet for the students interested in the arts and affected by the budget cuts in art programs.

LEGO Art seeks to address the lack of opportunity for recognition of inner city students. This program attempts to provide and after-school outreach in order to provide alternative outlets such as drugs, gangs, and violence for these young students.

The program recognizes that many single parent families exist and parents cannot guarantee attendance or involvement in their child’s art or educational development. By creating a website and virtual gallery of the children’s work, parents could view the art and recognize the hardwork their child has accomplished.

Objective

LEGO Art will build a strong foundation for the children and help to pave the path for them to pursue higher education.

Students will:
• Increase student self-esteem through recognition
• Learn new terminologies in architectural and engineering context
• Use creativity to formalize a design from concept to 3-dimensional LEGO sculpture
• Express their own ideas to be displayed to the public
• Use teamwork with other students to develop collaboration and communication skills

Proposed Solution:
The youth at this program will use LEGO bricks as a medium for their art, creating a unique opportunity compared to the traditional art programs already widely established. The solution would provide the after school outreach program for the youth and continuously promote the program through the use of technological innovations including a website and virtual galleries. It would also ensure that students would receive recognition through media outlets an exhibitions of the art. We hope that this will encourage self-confidence and self-efficacy while improving their self-esteem.

Methodology

Educational Development
• Develop a 2-week curriculum in collaboration with IIT’s Math and Science Education Department (MSED)
• Execute a pilot program at the Louis L. Valentine Boys and Girls Club in the Bridgeport area
• Use brainstorming define the term "LEGO Art"

Funding and Sustainability
• Develop website and online gallery for the student art
• Create partnerships with local businesses
• Research grants to be executed in the following semesters

Recognizing Individuals
• Research recognition methods
• Plan a exhibition gallery for the student work
• Create unique trophies that reflect the students individualism and art piece