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## Kennedy Center expands the arts for Trenton kids

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By Thomas Albano

Trenton may soon be alive with the sounds of music when Westminster College of the Arts plays a key role for the city's part in the *Ensuring the Arts for Any Given Child* program.

*Any Given Child*, overseen by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., helps ensure a long-term plan in arts education for students from kindergarten through eighth grade in various cities. For Trenton, *Any Given Child* will make use of the Kennedy Center, the city's public schools and other local organizations to help create a strategy for education in the arts.

Trenton is not only the 19th partner city in the U.S. to be selected for the program, but also is the first in the Northeast.

"The Kennedy Center's *Any Given Child* grant offers a wonderful opportunity for our children's school and the City of Trenton," Trenton Mayor Eric Jackson said. "It will showcase the talent of our children and teaching staff and highlight the rich and diverse artistic and cultural community which calls Trenton home. My office looks forward to working with other members of the Community Arts Team in the development and implementation of a strategic arts education plan working directly with the Kennedy Center for the Trenton school district."

Rider will be a strategic partner for Trenton's participation in *Any Given Child*, with resources and expertise from the university being used for the program's benefit. Westminster College of the Arts faculty and students will help bring learning experiences and opportunities to the program.

According to Matthew Shaftel, dean of the Westminster College of the Arts, this program will help benefit arts students both in and out of the classroom.

"Students participating in the arts are engaged in life and are empowered to be fulfilled, responsible citizens who make a profound, positive impact on our world," Shaftel said. "We also understand the importance of strategic partnerships in achieving this goal, and therefore are proud to be engaged in this exciting program, and look forward to bringing our talented students to the schools in the city of Trenton."

The program will consist of two phases. The first will see a thorough review of arts education in the city schools by representatives from the Kennedy Center and the Trenton Public Education Foundation. This will help determine

what resources the city already has and what improvements are needed. This phase, which will help the community create a plan to improve arts education in Trenton, will take about nine months to complete.

The second phase will then see a committee help put the plan into action, making recommendations to the school district and the local arts organizations. They may bring in resources from the Kennedy Center if needed, such as professional development for teachers and online supplemental lessons.

On Sept. 24, the first of seven meetings throughout the school year of a Community Arts Team was held at the Trenton Board of Education building. At this meeting, the Community Arts Team, brought together by the Trenton Public Education Foundation, began working on an arts education plan for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The plan is expected to be announced in late summer.

According to a press release, the Trenton Public Education Foundation will coordinate this project in partnership with the Trenton School District, the Mayor's Office, local arts groups, and the business and higher education communities.

According to those behind *Any Given Child*, including Kennedy Center senior vice president of education Mario Rossero, the program's development in other areas has resulted in successes, such as the hiring of more arts teachers and communities expanding offers in the arts for students.

"The students of Trenton are on the path to be inspired and energized through the arts," he said. "We are particularly grateful to our National Committee member, Georgeanne Moss, to the Trenton Public Education Foundation which submitted the application on behalf of the Trenton School District and to Mayor Jackson and [Trenton Public Schools Superintendent] Dr. [Francisco] Durán, for their tireless efforts to bring this day to fruition. We look forward to seeing the positive impact this program will have on the Trenton community."