# JOY2LEARN STRATEGIC STUDY

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**In collaboration with**
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## Background

***The mission of the Joy2Learn Foundation is to provide quality arts content to children and youth throughout America***

In 2000, the Joy2Learn Foundation developed a concept to create a media-rich arts education program based on Leonard Bernstein's seminal educational television show updated with interactive web-based technology. The goal of this innovative concept was to incorporate high bandwidth audio and streaming video to present leading artists of our time in an educational context and to provide access to high quality arts learning free to all schools in America.

Funding was acquired to create two initial e-presentations featuring pianist Alan Gampel and actor Hector Elizondo. After testing the pilot modules, funding was obtained to create two more artist e-presentations with trumpeter and composer Wynton Marsalis and tap dancer and choreographer Gregory Hines. During subsequent platform and content upgrades and the creation of the current modules and resource materials, an advisory group helped shape the content and guide professional development for teachers.

A formative study was commissioned by Joy2Learn to assess the pedagogical quality of the web site. The findings by Dr. Robert Horowitz, Columbia University, were very positive, noting the quality and usefulness of the website with recommendations to create teacher materials and professional development to facilitate classroom use.

Joy2Learn acquired support to create two visual arts modules that feature painter Elizabeth Murray and sculptor Richard Serra. In 2007, the website was redesigned to accommodate all six e-presentations, numerous lesson plans and online discussion forums for teachers and for students.

## Introduction

Most of the Joy2Learn Foundation's financial resources have been allocated toward the research and development of the web content, maintenance and hosting. It has functioned with a minimal operating budget and no office or staff other than the limited part-time work of founder Alan Gampel, with additional support and oversight by the Board of Directors. This has been a workable strategy to produce and distribute web resources to schools but it does not sufficiently address website upgrades needed to keep pace with advances in online technology and education, growth of teacher professional development, the expansion of market reach, or a long-term plan for organizational stability and growth. Consequently, with support from the Ford Foundation, Joy2Learn has been engaged in a strategic planning process to reflect upon its current education program and to look toward the future to determine its goals, objectives and organizational capacity.

The planning process is by led by Hollis Headrick, strategic planning consultant, in collaboration with Laura Jeffers and Chad Fasca of the Educational Development Center's The Center for Children and Technology (CCT).  This study summarizes key issues, findings and recommendations to stimulate discussion and further deliberation by the Board and as a means to solicit critical input from Joy2Learn's educational and donor advisors to help chart future directions for the organization.  This study is complemented by two CCT reports.  The *User Feedback-Summary of Findings* documents teacher responses to the website, and the *Summary of Research and Recommendations* reviews the website analysis, the web scan, user feedback and makes recommendations in those areas.

The Board received two interim reports in July 2008: 1) a CCT analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the website and a comparative web scan of education sites to illustrate promising ideas for Joy2Learn, and 2) an assessment from the consultant of current assets, including a review of professional development programs, preliminary results from artist and teacher surveys, CCT key findings, commentary from arts education administrators and recommendations for next steps in the planning process.

## This study addresses three major lines of inquiry.

1.    WEB ASSETS AND PROGRAM DIRECTIONS

   - Does the website function effectively?
   - How can it be improved?
   - Do teachers find it valuable?
   - What suggestions do teachers have to improve the site?
   - What are potential new program directions?

2.    LEADERSHIP: CURRENT CAPACITY AND FUTURE POTENTIAL

   - What is the current and future role of volunteer leadership?

3.    ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS

   - What is the current organizational capacity?
   - What are the plans for staff?
   - Are there potential fundraising sources?
   - What are the strategies for marketing and outreach?
   - What are the projections for a three-year budget?

# WEB ASSETS AND PROGRAM DIRECTIONS

***Teacher and Artist Feedback***
*Teachers and artists who agreed to participate in this study were very positive about their experiences with the site and its possibility for expanded use. They had no trouble envisioning how Joy2Learn could support their curriculum in a wide range of subject areas and across the curriculum. This was true across the board, including for New York City teachers, who had only one introductory training session. This suggests that Joy2Learn as it currently exists can be a powerful teaching and learning tool. This conclusion confirms earlier data reported by Dr. Robert Horowitz.*

- Teachers found the content to be engaging for students at different grade levels and easy to connect both to curriculum in multiple content areas and to students' real lives and worlds.
- Teachers like the activities associated with the e-Presentations, and reported that their students enjoyed them as well.
- Teachers like the lesson plans as well, and want to see more.
- However, the lesson plans need to be reorganized for browsing in a database that enables teachers to know something of the content without opening each individual lesson plan file.
- While most teachers reported that the site was easy for their students to navigate, some teachers found the navigation wanting.

***Website Improvements***
*The following recommendations are offered drawing on research, site review, and web scan, as well as CCT's experience with teachers and electronic educational materials. The site is very attractive and dynamic in its present format. It has unique features, which can be improved in stages as budget allows. Joy2Learn can solicit bids for upgrades and can reach out to colleges and universities to offer work experience to graduate students to provide media development and educational content programming. Recommendations are presented in priority order.*

- Keep the e-Presentation format.
- Create a more detailed site map.
- Build a searchable database.
- Remove the inactive user forums and reactivate them when needed.
- Establish a common structure for future e-Presentations.
- Expand the repertoire of e-Presentations.
- Add new creative interactive games and exercises that promote critical thinking and inquiry.
- In the future, provide videos in downloadable format in addition to e-Presentations to address the needs of teachers.

***Teacher Professional Development***
*Pilot professional development has been successful and needs to grow as funding and organizational capacity permit.  Professional development is not required to use Joy2Learn.  However, support for teachers enables the site to be more effectively employed in schools, offers opportunities to link with cultural organizations and is an attractive program for prospective donors.*

- Pursue ongoing professional development with support of National Endowment for the Arts (notification March 2009) and other funders.
- Discuss the development of an online arts education course with the Center for Online Professional Education so that teachers may receive graduate credit and/or educational credits for salary increases.
- Stress the ability of Joy2Learn to address state standards in four art forms.
- Target districts for professional development that may result in contracts for classroom application (California arts education block grants).
- Collaborate with cultural organizations to incorporate Joy2Learn in their programs, such as the LA Music Center and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

***Strategic Partnerships***
*Maximize exposure by forging strategic partnerships with districts, arts organizations, related professional organizations and complementary websites.*

- Continue to develop relationships with LA Music Center and New York City Department of Education to reach more teachers and students, and to establish credibility with donors and educators who look to these urban districts as leaders in education reform.
- Embed Joy2Learn within another website, such as ArtsEdge, to enhance the host site and drive traffic to Joy2Learn,
- Explore relationships with arts education professional associations, such as National Association for Music Education (MENC), National Art Education Association, National Dance Association, etc.

## JOY2LEARN LEADERSHIP
## CURRENT CAPACITY AND FUTURE POTENTIAL

Interviews with members of the Board of Directors demonstrated very strong and consistent support for the mission and a personal affinity for the arts and education.  Due to the size of the organization, the Board functions primarily as a support group without specified roles and responsibilities or a committee structure common in larger non-profits organizations. Several directors have emerged who fundraise, manage finances, and develop web material.  These individuals have assumed the leadership roles and have substituted for a lack of administrative staff.

The informal style of Board oversight has been adequate to support activities and to support the development of the website, but now needs to address long-term organizational growth. The Board is taking steps to create a vision, establish key goals to set the organization's fundamental long-range direction and define objectives for measurable levels of achievement. If Joy2Learn is to mature and expand its activities, it will be difficult for the Board to guide policy, fundraise, support the website maintenance and related educational activities without this foundation. At present, the Board does not have the financial resources to properly capitalize the organization or the contacts to secure general operating support funds to employ a professional staff. This crossroads is common for non-profit organizations as they mature and move beyond the vision of one or more founders to establish an organization with distributed leadership and quality programs that address the needs of their customers or constituents.

Board development and fundraising for Joy2Learn is a challenge, in part, because its mission: "To provide quality arts content to children and youth throughout America," while commendable, is very broad. Joy2Learn is perhaps at a disadvantage for some grant applications because its program (the website) is "virtual" and exists only on the internet without a tether to a bricks and mortar home that grounds the organization in the community.

There is admiration among Joy2Learn's supporters and educational colleagues who are very supportive of the website's ability to reach students and teachers everywhere in the United States, and anywhere in the world, 24/7. But with its low community profile and virtual presence, Joy2Learn may have a difficult time attracting new board members, which in turn makes it unlikely that it will be able to raise the funds to hire staff to reach its full potential as a vital education resource.

### Board Development
*Board development should be a priority to provide the social network, fundraising ability and source of expertise to provide the engine for Joy2Learn to make the transition from an informal network of supporters to a more structured and effective arts and education organization.*
- Develop board recruitment materials to share with prospective members.
- Consider working with the Arts and Business Council or similar organization to help to identify potential board members.
- Develop a desired "sector list" of current and future board members to identify their expertise and contacts within key sectors of the community.
- Reach out to prospects guided by their interest, financial resources, expertise and level of community engagement.
- Establish a "give or get" level of financial support for board membership.
- When possible, invite board members to observe local Joy2Learn school activities.

# ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS

***Professional Staff***
*As noted above, Joy2Learn cannot reach its potential without paid staff to handle the administration of the organization. It is even more crucial in this challenging economic climate. Without staff, Joy2Learn has no professional presence in the arts and education community. Website development and program initiatives may be difficult to manage if Joy2Learn relies on consultants hired for projects who have no ongoing commitment to the best interests of the organization. In this transition period, board members will have to continue their important administrative roles until such time as staff is fully functional.*

- Consider hiring a part-time administrative associate on a consultant basis in 2009 to begin working two days per week.
- Priority should be given to grant writing, attendance at professional meetings for networking and visibility, oversight of critical website improvements and supervision of professional development consultants as needed.
- Work toward the goal of hiring a full-time director in 2010, while maintaining a consultant/administrator two-days per week.
- Establish an office, ideally in a donated or subsidized shared workspace with other non-profits to minimize overhead costs.
- Evaluate staffing levels, functions, quality of work and financial capacity on an ongoing basis.

***Fundraising and Development***
*Development strategies that mine the resources of media companies, individuals, corporations and foundations will be a key to the success of Joy2Learn. To date, fundraising has been quite respectable on a project basis, garnering support from major institutional donors. However, Joy2Learn is challenged to define itself within the typical guidelines of foundations and donors because the website and related professional development cut across media arts, education and arts education funding categories. Without an institutional presence or partner, or visible school programs it will be more difficult to raise funds.*

- Exploit relationships with current and past donors.
- Add a feature on the website to encourage and accept online donations.
- Investigate and apply to a variety of funding sources to diversify funding strategies.
- Research potential funding sources such as the MacArthur, MetLife, Irvine and Hewlett foundations, IBM, JP Morgan Chase, Comcast, Google Ad Grants, Target, Microsoft Community Engagement, SONY, and the Entertainment Industries Foundation (LA), among many others.
- Apply for government grants, through the National Endowment for the Arts, US Department of Education, California Arts Council and others.

- Draw upon relationships with high profile artists, producers, and others in the Los Angeles arts and entertainment industry, and other high net worth individuals.
- Develop joint fundraising proposals that support collaborative programs, like the Burbank schools professional development project with the LA Music Center.

### *Marketing and Visibility*

*Visibility and reach for a small organization is a challenge in any field, but it is particularly difficult with the proliferation of websites and media resources. Advertising is expensive and without an institutional anchor and support it can be prohibitive. However, there are free or low-cost methods to reach teachers and administrators and strategically placed paid advertising can pay-off. In addition to attendance at major conferences and events, board members or staff should look into the various editorial and advertising strategies that will yield the greatest benefits. The following examples and options are listed in ascending order from free or minimal cost, to moderate and expensive cost.*

- Re-brand the Joy2Learn name to appear immediately in search engines.
- Apply to Google for free pop-up advertisements through Google Ad grants.
- Send press releases to eSchoolNews and Classroom News to announce free web resources for teachers; Classroom News reaches 44,000 teachers weekly; 45,000 eSchoolNews online subscribers are interested in media education; exploit the October 2009 arts editorial focus.
- Investigate editorial options such as press releases or feature stories at the major education organization websites, American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Education Association (NEA) and Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and education publishers such as EdWeek, Scholastic or McGraw-Hill.
- Send press releases and announcements to the state chapters of the Alliance for Arts Education for website placement.
- Present workshops at arts and education conferences such as the national Arts Education Partnership Forums, New York City Arts in Education Roundtable, California Alliance for Arts Education, and others.
- Place strategic ads in low cost publications such as the online eSchoolNews where $500 buys a prominent 7x10 inch ad reaching 45,000 subscribers for a month; clickable ads go directly to J2L.
- Target the most prominent national education conferences and rent an exhibit booth, such as National Educational Computing Conference, $3,150, ASCD, $1,825, or Technology Leadership Conference, $1,510.
- Employ a web marketer to create viral marketing and email blasts to reach the educational communities on YouTube, TeacherTube, teacher blogs and other sites.

***Projected Three-Year Budget***
*The budget was generated using an incremental growth model. Estimates of income and expenses are in typical budget categories. However, because of Joy2Learn's project-based fiscal activity, these estimates should be viewed as a starting point and guide for Board discussion and further refinement.*

*Income projections assume gradual increases in funding derived from current funding patterns and the identification of new sources such as $100,000 from the NEA (over three years). It also posits a site sponsor in 2010 whose logo would be prominently displayed on the Joy2Learn homepage and the first page of each e-Presentation. Income increases as organizational capacity grows.*

*Expense projections increase as web development, program activity and staff compensation grow. Program activity assumes NEA professional development expenses; critical upgrades to website in 2009 and a new artist module added to the site in 2010 and 11. Staff includes part-time staff beginning 2009, two days a week on a consulting basis with no benefits, and a full-time director with benefits added in 2010. Overhead increases due to rented office space beginning 2010.*

# CONCLUSION

The Joy2Learn Board of Directors has much to be proud of; it has created and sustained a unique web-based resource that in many ways was ahead of its time. Without the benefit of staff, Joy2Learn has successfully funded, produced and distributed the website and forged relationships with major institutions and school districts. Evaluations have demonstrated that the website can be a powerful tool for teaching and learning. As with all periodic program reviews, the website evaluation provides an opportunity to reflect on what's working and what needs improvement. But the quality of the website is but one part of the strategic study.

This is also an organizational assessment that suggests future directions. Joy2Learn's directors will examine the research and recommendations in this report along with expert opinions of other advisors to determine the best process to transition from a volunteer-driven organization to a more dynamic and effective arts education organization with a national scope. This will not be an easy route given the low priority for arts education in many schools, a very competitive fundraising environment and a chilly economic climate. However, Joy2Learn's mission is a vital one that can help children to learn the 21st century skills that are essential for success. There is a great need for quality resources that stimulate imagination and creativity in our schools. Joy2Learn offers an exciting entry point and pathway for all children, but few have had the chance to find their own voice through this innovative digital platform of artists and educational material. This is a mission that is authentic and worthwhile.