

transformative art + design academy cultureworks

Accessibility

By networking with area school counselors, teachers, parents, physicians, and therapists, CultureWorks recruits students who are artistically inclined but who lack access to afterschool arts-based programming because of psychological, physical, or social challenges, and/or geographical, financial, or transportation limitations. We overcome these limitations by offering tuition-free programs, transporting students to and from programming when necessary, and recruiting and training staff and volunteers accordingly. Feedback from students, parents, counselors, and teachers indicates that our programs are affordable, welcoming, and accessible to students who rely on artistic expression for their well-being.

Financial Accessibility:

In June of 2025 we pivoted from a pay-what-you-can-afford system of registration to tuition-free programs, which nearly doubled annual enrollment. Roughly 40% of our 200 students enrolled in multi-week classes live in households below the ALICE threshold and 21% live below the poverty threshold. Forty-fifty percent identify as BIPOC (Black/African American, Indigenous, Latine/Mexican American, Asian, or a mix of two or more races/ethnicities), which carries a higher risk for poverty and homelessness in our community, and nearly 100% of students we serve through our partner organizations and workshops identify as BIPOC. Four CultureWorks alumni who grew up in low-income households are currently pursuing degrees with fully-funded “last dollars” Promise Scholarships and a fifth student, received a nearly full ride scholarship. We’re honored to be one of the nominating organizations for the Holland/Zeeland Promise program through the Community Foundation, which makes higher education accessible to students through a “last-dollars” (fully funded) scholarship.

In Ottawa County, roughly 26% of families live under the ALICE threshold or in poverty. Even families living above the ALICE threshold struggle to afford after school programs, especially arts programming, which is costly. Some of our core students and SAC members take 3-5 classes with us per year and are with us for 7-8 years, which would cost up to \$1750 per year if they were paying full price. Oftentimes, our students don’t participate in sports or other youth activities, so they would miss out on vital opportunities for peer-peer engagement, professional development, mentoring, and skills acquisition if not involved in CultureWorks.

Physical, Social, and Mental Health Accessibility

CultureWorks is committed to inclusivity and accessibility in all its programming. We offer ASL and Spanish interpretation upon request, and have a particular focus on supporting positive mental health through healing art. Our organization ensures that all events and classes are fully accessible to individuals with visible, invisible, or mental disabilities, removing barriers to artistic expression and engagement. This commitment extends beyond our own programs to

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collaborations with community partners, where we assist in implementing disability-inclusive practices.

Our staff and Student Advisory Council proudly include members with diverse abilities, bringing valuable perspectives and experiences to our work. This representation enriches our programming and helps create a more inclusive environment for all participants. We regularly consult with disability advocates and organizations to refine our approaches and stay current with best practices in accessibility.

CultureWorks actively participates in local events, offering disability-inclusive art activities and workshops. We provide accommodations such as sensory-friendly spaces, and adaptive art tools to ensure everyone can participate fully. Our efforts aim to not only make art accessible but also to celebrate the unique contributions of artists with disabilities, fostering a community where creativity knows no bounds and every individual's artistic voice is valued and heard.

We serve a growing number of neurodivergent students and students with ongoing mental or social health challenges, and we receive referrals each semester from teachers, counselors, and therapists. We maintain small class sizes (10-12 students) and provide one-on-one assistance as needed. Concurrent classes are held in separately enclosed studios to limit noise & distractions, and our studio is centrally located and accessible by foot/bike, and wheelchair accessible. Over 50% of enrolled students report that they struggled with or been treated for anxiety, depression, or stress over the past 2 years, and 88% said that being creative helps them feel calmer, happier, or more joyful.

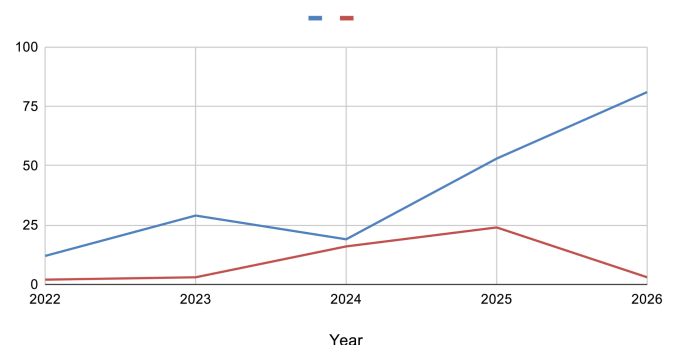
Transportation/Geographic Accessibility

CultureWorks is located in the heart of downtown Holland and is safely accessible by foot or bike. The population within .5 mile radius is approximately 4,449, and our central location is nearly equidistant travel time from public schools on the north side (West Ottawa) and the south side (Holland Public) of town.

Most families access our site by vehicle and a few by bike, but a growing number of students and families require transportation assistance in order to participate in afterschool programs.

Last year the number of students depending on transportation to class reached 81, straining our staff and resources. To economize resources and serve as many students as possible, we discontinued driving

Transportation to CW and Transportation Home



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students home, except in cases of extreme need.

Transportation has always been an obstacle for families participating in afterschool programs because many families don't have access to a vehicle, or are working during program hours. Transportation is also an obstacle for some of our staff and interns who come from ALICE backgrounds. We've provided free transportation for afterschool programs from our public schools since our founding, and over the years we've provided transportation to 3 college level interns and another contracted educator as well, who didn't otherwise have access.

While funders and grantors acknowledge that transportation is an insurmountable barrier for many students, there are few available resources for funding this program on an ongoing basis. Over the last 10 years, our board and staff have researched and tested potential solutions including public transportation, leased vehicles, nonprofit partnerships with shared rides, and staff's personal vehicles.

With the help of a generous \$60,000 matching grant from Vanguard Charitable in 2026, CultureWorks is purchasing one van to provide our students with safe, reliable, efficient access to life-changing programming, and we're raising funds for a second van, so we can continue to transport students from 6 schools on the north and south sides of town.

Accessibility: Representation

CultureWorks draws students from 18 area schools, with the majority from West Ottawa Public, Holland Public, and Black River Public Schools. Roughly 50% of enrolled students are from traditionally marginalized or underrepresented communities in the arts, with 40% identifying as BIPOC. Partnering organizations include the Boys & Girls Clubs (serving a high percentage of households under the ALICE threshold), Out on the Lakeshore (serving LGBTQ individuals and families), Children's Advocacy Center (serving child survivors of abuse), Bethany Christian Services (foster/adoption/mental health services), I Am Academy (serving Black teens), Latin Americans United for Progress, International Festival, the City of Holland, and Hope College's Trio Upward Bound (1st-generation college-bound students).

We strive to maintain a target population of 45%+ non-white students and 50%+ students in households below the ALICE threshold. We recognize that this balance of socio-economic and racial/ethnic backgrounds contributes to greater diversity, creativity, and socio-economic mobility, according to recent studies.

Investment Opportunities for Accessibility:

- \$40,000 Toyota Sienna Hybrid van (matching campaign)
- \$4,000 8-ft Cargo Trailer for mobile partner workshops and community-wide events
- \$1000 Interpretation services for Spanish & ASL, available upon request
- Program Supplies for classes supporting mental/social health

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- \$2,000 Ceramics Supplies
- \$1,500 Printmaking Supplies
- \$1,500 Painting Supplies
- \$1,000 Drawing Supplies
- \$500 Photography Supplies
- \$1,500 Translation, Printing, and Distribution of English/Spanish Fliers at Public Schools and Partner Organizations

Student Perspectives:

These quotes come from students with diverse backgrounds and experiences in regard to socioeconomic status, disability, gender, faith, race/ethnicity, and schooling:

Cultureworks was a groundbreaking discovery for me because it allowed me to unleash my full potential in art. Cultureworks was an oasis in a world where, to me, art was never really looked at or acknowledged. So donating to this organization is amazing and could help Cultureworks to find other kids like me and lead them to this oasis. - Gaurav Tallavajhala 9th grade

[I most enjoyed] trying all sorts of different materials. I usually stay in my comfort zone. This made me branch out. We tried spray paint, screen printing, and many more things I never thought of trying. It was really fun. Video game design is my go-to. This class helped me start to work on portfolio things. I got to meet many different people who didn't care about how you looked or acted. It made me feel safe here. It made me more in tune with my creativity, especially over the last few years. I'm gonna be sad to leave here [for college] next year. - Natalie Miller 12th

[I most enjoyed] the leadership opportunities, the acceptance, the friendliness, and the task levels. I don't usually go out of my comfort zone, but I did get the support and resources that pushed me. [And that was] very good! - Oliver Amerine 8th

This class was helpful. Not only did I learn Photography, I learned better social skills. One day at CultureWorks, I felt the confidence to ask a classmate if she would want to be my friend. I was happy she said yes! - Anahi Fernandez Loreda 7th grade

In so many ways, being a part of CW is something I look forward to every week, and I love the opportunities I get through CW. - Jax Zavala 11th grade

I'm really shy and very quiet and most of the time people mostly ignore me, so it was nice feeling really welcome in class. I'd like to maybe do graphic design stuff someday. I've gotten back into art more [because of CW]; I started spray painting with my dad. Matilda Marks 7th grade