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Cathedral Arts Project partners with JASMYN to create Safe Spaces for LGBTQ youth by starting with the arts

Jacksonville, Fla. (January 21, 2016) – the Cathedral Arts Project, through the Any Given Child Jacksonville initiative, is partnering with the Jacksonville Area Sexual Minority Youth Network (JASMYN) and Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) to challenge all elementary, middle and high school arts teachers in Duval County to go through “Safe Space” training to educate allies who support LGBTQ individuals in our schools.

A “Safe Space” is a place where all people, including LGBTQ individuals and allies, feel safe, welcome and included. The training aims to increase awareness, knowledge and skills for individuals and address the challenges that exist when advocating for LGBTQ peers.

The goal is to announce 100 percent participation by the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year. To help facilitate this goal, CAP and JASMYN will provide monthly trainings, beginning this month and running through May, that would allow for more than 420 teachers to participate.

“JASMYN is thrilled to be partnering with the Cathedral Arts Project,” said JASMYN Executive Director Cindy Watson. “We know that arts education is extremely important for all students, and these settings are often the first places that LGBTQ youth can find acceptance and safe space in their schools. Training arts teachers in awareness of LGBTQ students’ needs is a win-win for all of us.”

According to a 2013 survey of DCPS students, the percentage of students who had attempted suicide jumped from 9 percent for straight high school students to 27 percent for LGBTQ students.

“There’s a lot of research out there that suggests having access to tools for creative expression helps students better navigate challenges they face as LGBTQ individuals by increasing their emotional and physical wellbeing,” said Rev. Kimberly Hyatt, president & CEO of CAP. “As arts and music teachers tend to have a significant influence on all students – and the arts are often a haven for those facing challenges – it makes sense to ensure all our district’s arts teachers are trained on appropriate intervention strategies.”

The first training will be held in conjunction with the DCPS arts department planning day on January 22. Additional trainings are scheduled for February 24, March 30, April 27 and May 18, each of which will be held at the CAP offices from 4-5:30 p.m. If interested in attending a training, please contact Allison Galloway-Gonzalez at allison@capkids.org.

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*Now in its third decade of service, the mission of the **Cathedral Arts Project** is to enrich the quality of life in Northeast Florida through unleashing the creative spirit of young people. Our vision is for every child to benefit from a well-rounded education that includes dance, media arts, music, theatre and the visual arts. By providing direct instruction to students and teachers, facilitating partnerships and advocating for expanded access to arts education, the Cathedral Arts Project empowers children and youth to succeed in all areas of their lives. Learn more at capkids.org.*

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JASMYN supports and empowers LGBTQ young people by creating safe space, providing health and wholeness services, and offering youth development opportunities, while bringing people and resources together to promote equality and human rights. LGBTQ young people are affirmed in their identities, confident in their futures, and are a valued asset in the Northeast Florida community.

Duval County Public Schools is the 20th largest school district in the nation and the sixth largest school district in Florida. The district is committed to ensuring that students are prepared for success in college or a career, and life. In addition, the district will make sure its mission of providing education excellence is reflected in every school, in every classroom, for every student, every day.