

Learning Productions - Adult/Youth Collaboration at Beam Center

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This case example highlights what ambitious adult/youth collaboration can look like in practice, highlighting Beam Center's pedagogical approach of 'Learning Productions', which embody real-life creative projects as they occur in professional and artistic contexts.

At Beam Center, a maker-focused youth development organization based in New York City, youth and teaching artists work together on what they call "Learning Productions", a pedagogy and core philosophy "designed to embody the knowledge and beauty of real-life creative projects as they occur in professional and artistic contexts ('in the wild') and yield tangible, functional products." Learning productions can range in complexity, "from fairly simple projects like a BoomBox constructed with wood and electronics completed over a few weeks to large-scale constructions like the Digital Poetry Project which employed a laser-cutter, Arduino coding and advanced woodworking that was constructed over several months."



Beam Center shares about one project in their whitepaper on learning productions:

Beam instructor Lizzie worked with teenagers A and J from South Brooklyn Community High school, a transfer school. As part of a service learning project, all the students were asked to do a project that benefited their neighborhood. Three students wanted to create shelters for the many stray cats in their Red Hook neighborhood. They designed a cat shelter that they wanted to fabricate, and Lizzie worked intensively with them because they didn't know how to build it. Lizzie consulted with them, helped them improve their plan and then taught them how to use the tools. They created a 3-story Cat Condo suitable for outdoors from wood and carpet with hand-held tools. In addition to construction, the students had to find place in the community to place the Cat Shelters. This ended up being more difficult that they had anticipated, since not everyone wants to attract stray cats. They were persistent, putting in extra time on the weekends to talk with neighborhood businesses about the project, and eventually found a home for the shelter.

Read more about Beam Center's Learning Productions approach in their [white paper](#) on page 49.