



Creative Youth Development

Engaging Students of Color Experiencing Housing Instability
in Seattle Public Schools

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Cover photo: Comics-making activity at Seattle Public Library’s 2016 event, *Create Change: Youth & Family Homelessness and the Arts*, photo by Otts Bolisay.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, the second in a two-part series, gives in-depth context and evidence for arts education strategies that engage young people of color, a significant number of whom are experiencing housing instability. This assessment analyzes the impact of within school and BIPOC led community arts programs that centers creative youth development frameworks and arts education. The purpose of this report is to capture best practices of the Creative Youth Development (CYD) Secondary Arts Project through the experiences of administrators, community teaching artists, and students at two high schools in Seattle Public Schools (SPS) who enroll high numbers of youth experiencing housing instability: South Lake High School and Southeast Interagency Academy. Three school arts programs were assessed: (1) WeAPP, a speech writing and public speaking program, (2) The Acting Lab, where students learn the fundamentals of theater, and (3) Print 4 Life, a program that teaches students the mechanics of screen printing and gives students first hand experience with entrepreneurship.

Using a case study and multi-method approach, we highlight a connection between youth outcomes and arts educational interventions. This connection demonstrates relationships between schools, community partners, teachers, and students. Arts partnerships with schools support BIPOC teaching artists in creating environments where BIPOC students. The unique positionality of BIPOC students who may be experiencing housing instability encourage teaching artists to innovate pedagogical strategies. Administrators then institutionalize CYD programming. Having CYD programs that are BIPOC led and place-based engendered **culturally relevant teaching and learning strategies**, which engage social-emotional, relational, and cognitive learning. In creating authentic relationships with their students, teaching artists were able to create a sense of **belonging** and **community building**. Administrators and teachers worked collaboratively to highlight student's creative works and provide the opportunity for young people to experience artwork in their local communities. Teaching artists also harnessed artmaking as a way for students to **process grief and loss**. Young people were able to honor the memories of students and others close to them in the school community.

Students continued developing an essential toolkit of skills over the course of the project. Young people's **interpersonal skills** developed in the form of confidence and self-esteem building. Further, administrators and teachers noted how many students became more expressive, open, and communicative. Classroom observations and the results from our student survey indicated that students are building **21st century skills** of communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, growth mindset, and perseverance. Lastly, students were exposed to and practiced concepts of **creative workforce development** and **creative entrepreneurship**. Teaching artists provided insight into the potential of working in creative economies using their own experience and included entrepreneurial leadership opportunities for young people. CYD programming implemented by talented teaching artists nurtured the natural development of these crucial life skills.

Though COVID-19 required SPS to pivot its model toward distance learning, and the pandemic and its associated societal response further exacerbated existing racial and economic inequities, we believe these CYD principles and culturally relevant learning and teaching approaches to arts education can benefit all students, but particularly students of color who may be experiencing housing instability.

LESSONS LEARNED & PROMISING PRACTICES

- 1. Alternative option schools are radical spaces of transformation for BIPOC students experiencing housing instability.** They are impactful arts programs because of their small class sizes and flexible learning environments, and are particularly effective in reaching students who belong to marginalized communities. These programs can be fostered in any school environment.
- 2. Culturally relevant teaching and learning is a well-documented approach that fosters feelings of belonging and inclusion in the classroom.** Community arts programs took place in majority BIPOC-enrolled schools and were BIPOC-focused. Having artists of color who deployed culturally relevant material fostered meaningful relationships between students and teaching artists.
- 3. CYD and arts programming develop other life skills.** These programs demonstrated how to harness the inherent qualities of CYD and high-quality arts education to incorporate important life skills (e.g. critical thinking, self-awareness, resilience) that are relevant to the young people.
- 4. Community engagement paired with wrap-around services is crucial.** Because of the vulnerability students experiencing housing instability face, CYD and arts education initiatives should be paired with basic needs and crisis support services to ensure student success.
- 5. CYD programming during the academic school day is a strategy for increased student engagement and attendance.** Effective teaching artists using tenets of CYD encourage greater student engagement during the school day by forming authentic and meaningful relationships with students. Accountability for students can be institutionalized when administrators allow CYD programs to be credit-bearing and count towards degree completion.
- 6. Center the voices of students of color in curriculum design.** Arts programming can act as an outlet for students of color to process their life experiences, explore their identities, and work through tragic events. Further, young people can use art to focus on issues that are important to their communities, including social justice activism.

INTRODUCTION

CREATIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: PROVIDING THE TOOLS FOR YOUTH SUCCESS

Kardea¹ had vision and talent before participating in Print 4 Life, a screen printing class offered in his high school. Dedicating himself to this program and working closely with Teaching Artist and business

¹ Authorization to use the young person's first name, who is above 18 and able to grant consent.

owner Greg Thornton, exposed him to a potential career in the creative industries. At the same time he was working on honing his screen printing skills, Kardea's photography was selected to premiere at a social justice art exhibition, he contributed to his school's artistic community, joined a student entrepreneurship program, and received his high school diploma. Kardea took the skills he learned with Print 4 Life to open his own pop-up storefront where he exhibited his first line of custom screen printed apparel, including jeans, shoes, and patches. He has made a reputation for himself in the local Seattle art scene. Continuing the effort that earned these accomplishments, Kardea is building his artistic enterprise.

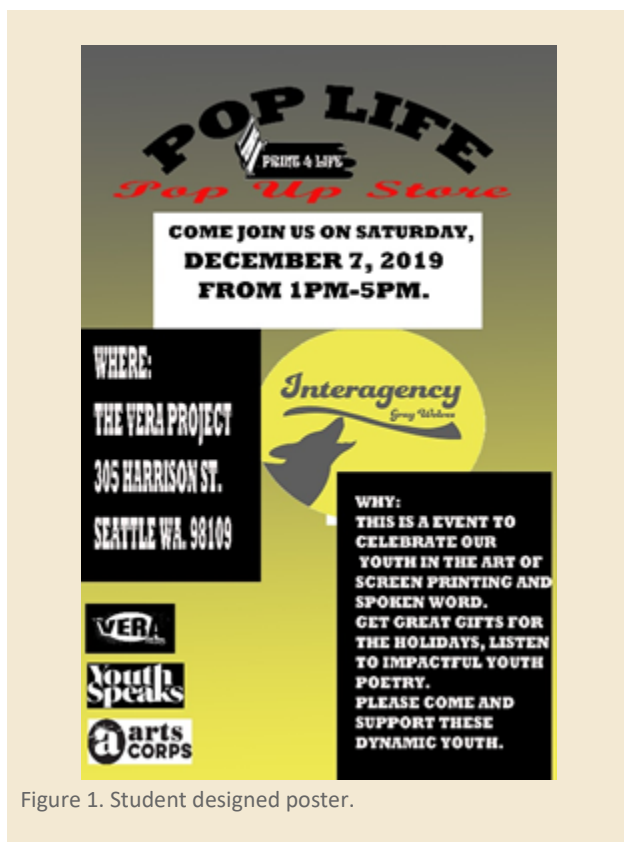


Figure 1. Student designed poster.

The hard work that students like Kardea accomplish is not without challenges. Students of color, particularly Black students and students from low-income households, are often embedded in under-resourced schools and communities that lack equitable arts access.² Kardea is one example of how young people, when confronted with adolescent and life obstacles, can utilize arts learning and artmaking as a path forward in their education and careers. Further, his experience illustrates how a CYD approach to K-12 art education expands students' educational growth, in addition to their creative and artistic knowledge.

THE CREATIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SECONDARY ARTS PROJECT

In the 2018-2019 school year, The Creative Advantage received support from the City of Seattle's Mayor's Innovation Team and the Human Services Department to launch the **Creative Youth Development Secondary Arts Project** (CYD Secondary Arts Project). The CYD Secondary Arts Project is informed by a theory of change model³ that argues rigorous and high quality arts instruction gives students opportunities to cultivate competencies known as 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, civic engagement, and self-expression, which in the long-term instill qualities of resilience, community,

² The Creative Advantage, <http://www.creativeadvantageseattle.org/>

³ Creative Youth Development, <https://www.creativeyouthdevelopment.org/>

and self-efficacy in the individual (Curtis, Nguyen-Akbar, LaPadula, Davis, 2019a). The primary goal of the CYD Secondary Arts Project was to provide service and alternative schools⁴ with resources to maintain high quality arts programming, as a way to engage and retain BIPOC students struggling with housing instability. These programs take place during the school day as opposed to after school, which is when most CYD programs take place. The theoretical framework, context, and a glossary of terms can be [viewed here](#).

The project focuses on serving primarily low-income BIPOC youth attending two option high schools with continuous enrollment, **South Lake High School (SLHS)** and **Southeast Interagency Academy (SEIA)** in the city of Seattle. Both high schools are already a part of The Creative Advantage community. These schools partner with three community based arts programs, **The Acting Lab**, **Print 4 Life**, and **WeAPP**. SLHS and SEIA have disproportionate numbers of McKinney-Vento students and students experiencing housing instability compared to comprehensive high schools.⁵ Additionally, many of the students attending these schools would be considered by Seattle Public Schools as ‘students of color furthest from educational justice’.⁶

The intentional design of the CYD Secondary Arts Project has the potential to impact students in many areas of their lives. Taught by artists of color, using curriculum embedded with trauma-informed and culturally responsive curriculum and assignments, students are able to connect with their teaching mentors, peers, and school. These programs offer outlets of self-expression and creativity, allowing students to explore their identities. Other benefits for young people participating include creative workforce development, entrepreneurship training, and leadership opportunities. Most importantly, these programs create spaces where young people can feel seen, be heard, and develop a voice. The CYD Secondary Arts Project makes space for both arts enrichment and healing for students who are struggling with issues such as housing instability, substance use, and violence, acting as an anchor to the school community. Given the potential of CYD, it is important to understand how this strategy can be used to engage students who are most vulnerable, such as those whose families struggle with housing instability or those living in low-income communities. However, there is a lack of research focusing on the potential impacts of high quality arts instruction based on principles of CYD on students experiencing educational injustice. This report highlights student, administrator, and teaching artist perspectives on CYD, artmaking, and supporting creative youth. Preliminary findings suggest that:

(1) Administrators and teaching artists leverage their respective CYD programs as a way to **increase**

⁴ Seattle Public School service and alternative option schools can be browsed at https://www.seattleschools.org/admissions/registration/about_our_schools/service_and_alternative_option_schools

⁵ The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." For more information about McKinney-Vento students in SPS please see: https://www.seattleschools.org/departments/homeless_program

⁶ Seattle Public School Strategic Plan: https://www.seattleschools.org/district/district_quick_facts/strategic_plan. By centering African American boys and teens in the strategic plan and deploying the principles of targeted universalism, SPS is improving the educational experience for all our youth.

student engagement, improve student retention, provide credit retrieval, and build trusting relationships between students and teaching artists;

(2) Through participation in the program, students are continuing to **develop 21st century skills**, become involved in **community** through **mutual aid, philanthropy, racial justice activism** and **memorialization** of loved ones and peers who have passed away, and have made strides in **personal growth**;

(3) Institutional and organizational contexts specific to the CYD Secondary Arts Project have facilitated **belonging, culturally responsive teaching and learning, community building, and creative entrepreneurship**.

BACKGROUND

SIGNIFICANCE OF CREATIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Creative youth development, or CYD, is a set of practices that utilizes high quality arts education and strategies of positive youth development like high expectations, achievement, leadership, and community building to promote the growth of life skills⁷ in young people. CYD programs practice a variety of art forms and can have specific focus areas. The core features of successful CYD program design include creating safe spaces, centering youth voices, providing mentorship, focusing on building youth assets, providing resources, and embedding youth in the community. These elements were present in the arts education pilot programs discussed in this report. Overall, young people who participate in CYD programs have shown growth in life skills, confidence, and resilience (Montgomery, 2017). When compared to students taught with traditional teaching methods⁸, students who demonstrated gains in life skills had improved standardized test scores, learning confidence, flexible knowledge, and content mastery (Bellanca, 2010).

In the context of this project, the potential of CYD has heightened significance. CYD programs are often built to work with students from marginalized communities that have large opportunity gaps⁹ -- environmental circumstances such as neighborhood, school, race or ethnicity, that limit young people's

CREATIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

“Creative youth development (CYD) is a recent term for a longstanding theory of practice that integrates creative skill-building, inquiry, and expression with positive youth development principles, fueling young people’s imaginations and building critical life

⁷ Life skills in this case, describes behaviors and practices that focus on social-emotional-psychological characteristics such as communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, cooperation, empathy, and others. Life skills are increasingly seen as essential in important life processes such as employment. There are other terms for life skills such as 21st century skills. This will be discussed later in the paper.

⁸ Discussing the merits and definitions of traditional teaching is outside the scope of this paper.

⁹ See Teach for America, *Why We Say “Opportunity Gap” Instead of “Achievement Gap”*, <https://www.teachforamerica.org/stories/why-we-say-opportunity-gap-instead-of-achievement-gap>

potential¹⁰. This is often because the core tenets of CYD offer meaningful and impactful youth engagement, which can be detrimentally absent from young people’s lives (Iwasaki, et. al., 2014). Thus, CYD programming has the potential to allow for more equitable educational and life outcomes for students of color. By providing opportunities for young people to develop 21st century skills, students have better chances for academic success, pursuing higher education, and getting a job (Hammond, 2014). CYD is an empirically validated strategy that educators can use to counteract the negative outcomes associated with opportunity gaps that BIPOC students experiencing housing instability.

skills.”¹¹

CYD programming centers youth voice and develops skills to be successful in adolescence and adulthood.

CYD programs should¹²:

- Provide safe spaces
- Build on student strengths
- Help develop prosocial skills with peers and adult mentors
- Are centered on the wants and needs of youth
- Set high expectations and have quality instruction
- Are holistic and take into account youth’s other psychosocial needs.

RACE, EQUITY, AND ARTS EDUCATION

There are legacies of racism in education that lead to negative academic outcomes, particularly for African American adolescents and men, and for students of color generally. Students of color experiencing housing instability are more likely to have lower rates of grade retention, lower standardized test scores, and higher rates of disciplinary sanctions like suspension and expulsion when compared to their privileged peers. Above and beyond completing secondary school, high school students should be preparing for early adulthood, developing 21st century skills, and reaching higher learning competencies. Developing these skills are crucial for students of color, particularly Black students, as they move towards earning their high school diplomas and prepare for early adulthood. One school-based strategy to overcome these hurdles that fosters opportunities for better educational experiences and youth engagement is to utilize arts programming. Access to arts education is often predictable by race, zip code, income, and home language. A focus on arts education and arts access for

¹⁰ Under-resourced urban schools such as the ones in this study face structural inequities in providing unstably-housed and homeless youth instruction on par with better-resourced and predominantly white schools. These structural inequities can lead to opportunity gaps. Beginning with entry into the public-school system, the opportunity gap persists across a student’s educational career. Students of color receive less instructional hours focusing on higher order thinking skills and cognitive development compared to their white peers. These students have fewer opportunities to develop habits of mind.

¹¹ The Creative Youth Development National Partnership, <https://www.creativeyouthdevelopment.org/>

¹² Mass Cultural Council, <https://seenandheard.massculturalcouncil.org/>

students facing educational injustice also means addressing the disparities in arts programming for poor students of color. Additionally, alternative and option schools with continuous enrollment, such as the ones in this pilot project, often face structural inequities such as lack of funding, fewer experienced teachers, and less technology access.

The CYD Secondary Arts Project focuses on providing arts programming opportunities to BIPOC students in alternative option schools to strategically address the racial inequities in arts access. Further, arts education can lead to positive academic outcomes.

- Academically, research shows that students who have high arts engagement also **perform better on standardized testing and have better literacy, math, verbal, critical thinking, and writing skills**¹³.
- Students receiving arts instruction improve their **social emotional learning (SEL) skills**. They are more likely to be compassionate, tolerant, empathetic, participate in community service, and engage in social perspective taking¹⁴.
- Students participating in arts education have more **positive attitudes toward school**. This is important; highly engaged students report feeling less bored during school hours and have increased motivation to achieve in school.

CASE SELECTION & METHOD

For this project, a holistic assessment approach was developed so that participants could have the opportunity to share their experiences with implementing CYD and culturally relevant arts programming while contextualizing this experience within a broader ecosystem of partnerships and educational structures.

ALTERNATIVE OPTION SCHOOLS WITH CONTINUOUS ENROLLMENT

South Lake High School (SLHS) and Southeast Interagency Academy (SEIA) have a smaller population of students, culturally relevant and community based support programs, and low student-to-teacher ratios. The schools can tailor education plans to the individual while remaining cognizant of the differential needs and potential challenges their students experience. Alternative option schools primarily serve low-income students of color. These schools were chosen specifically because of their designation. Alternative option schools reach students who may not be afforded the same creative and artistic opportunities, they offer flexibility to integrate arts education and CYD in a culturally relevant way, and work with students furthest from educational justice which is in line with the Seattle Public Schools (SPS) strategic plan¹⁵.

¹³ See Harvard Graduate School of Education Project Zero: <http://www.pz.harvard.edu/>

¹⁴ See Francisco Rios, Allen Trent, and Lillian Vega Casteneda, "Social Perspective Taking: Advancing Empathy and Advocating Justice." *Journal of Equity and Excellence in Education*. (36)1: 5-10.

¹⁵ https://www.seattleschools.org/district/district_quick_facts/strategic_plan

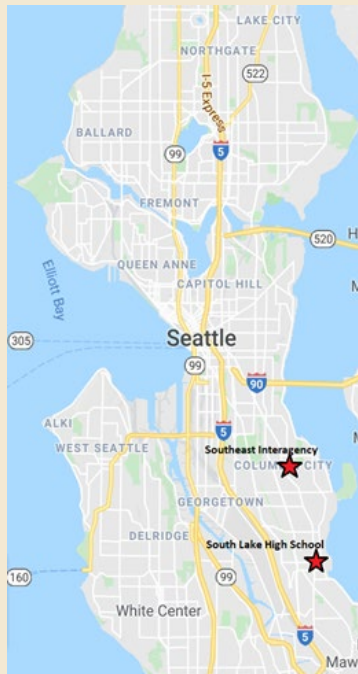


Figure 2. Location of field sites

In the context of SPS, alternative option schools with continuous enrollment are often implemented as a stopgap for credit retrieval or behavior management in an effort to enable student graduation¹⁶. However, administrators at SLHS and SEIA contend that students are cultivating durable skills preparing them for success beyond high school. Administrators in these schools partner with private, non-profit, and government resources to ensure students' needs are met. Schools have an infrastructure of wrap-around social services in place that CYD programming complements. Because the CYD Secondary Arts Project is housed in school during the school day, teaching artists and students are connected to these resources. For further characteristics and contexts of each site, please see Table 1.

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

Table 1. Context of School Sites		
Demographics	Institutional Best Practices	Approach to CYD
South Lake High School		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 96% of students¹⁷ from low-income households 50% McKinney-Vento¹⁸ 100% students of color Serves higher proportions of students with IEPs, students with disabilities, and migrant 	Administrators have taken the initiative to establish SLHS as an educational community where students will thrive, especially because of their commitment to CYD principles and arts programming. The administration's	Arts and CYD are central to the core identity of the school. Administrators are currently restructuring classes and curriculum to focus on mixed media digital arts. SLHS also has a recording studio. Students are able

¹⁶ Generally, option schools are privileged academic environments that are school choice or open enrollment, often with a focus in STEM or college preparation. SPS has recently updated alternative school designations to option schools with continuous enrollment, but they do not have the same resources as traditional option schools.

¹⁷ For further demographic breakdowns please see Appendix A.

¹⁸ SPS has been working to expand the definition of housing instability. However, because of guidelines and issues around stigma, this number is more than likely a conservative estimate.

families compared to comprehensive high schools.	vision is to create a place of liberated education and learning that is grounded in antiracist and anti-oppressive pedagogy. They see themselves as an asset to the community, providing an arts rich environment where young people choose to be.	to earn credits towards their high school diplomas when they take their CYD and Arts classes. The school has a strong emphasis in mixed media arts education.
Southeast Interagency Academy		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 69% from of students from low-income households¹⁹ 30% McKinney-Vento 87% students of color Serves higher proportions of students with IEPs, students with disabilities, and migrant families compared to comprehensive high schools. 	Administrator’s focus on creating a supportive environment for students. They recognize that the students are dealing with complex issues based in oppression. Their strategy is meeting students where they are no matter their past. Instead of taking disciplinary action like expulsion ²⁰ , they use community resources to meet student needs. SEIA has an open-door policy to students that leave. When they are ready to rejoin the community, staff and teachers are there to welcome them.	Arts education and CYD is an effective strategy to engage students. When students express interest in an artistic medium, administrators seek to meet that interest with practice. Students are able to earn credits towards their high school diplomas when they take their CYD and Arts classes.

CYD SECONDARY ARTS PROJECT PROGRAMS

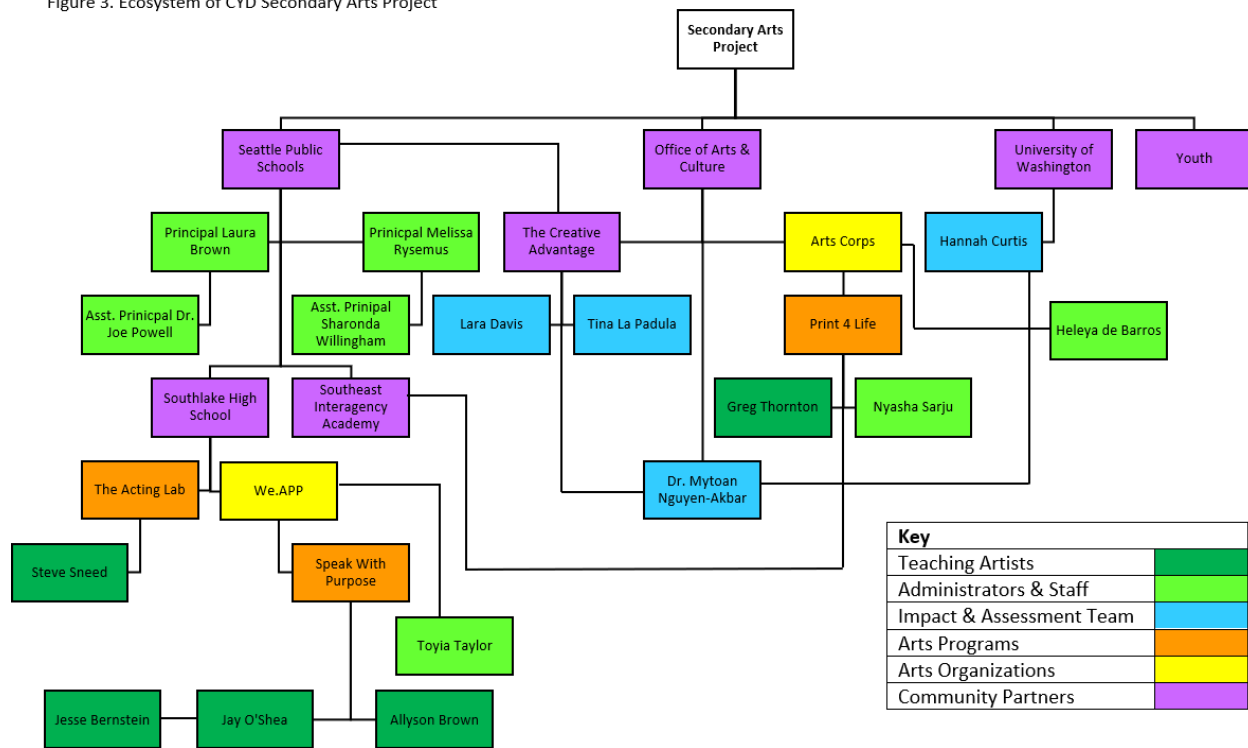
Table 2. CYD Program Descriptions	
WeAPP - We Act, Present, and Perform & “Speak with Purpose”	WeAPP ²¹ is a program created by Toyia Taylor ²² . Taught by Jay O’Shea, Allison Brown, Jesse Bernstein, the premise of the program is “individuals who speak with purpose have the greatest level of engagement and impact.” WeAPP curriculum focuses on students finding their voice, believing that what they say is meaningful, creating authentic stories, and telling those stories with passion. WeAPP is housed at South Lake High School.

¹⁹ Southeast Interagency is a part of the Interagency Academy. Only aggregate statistics were available.
²⁰ An outcome disproportionately faced by students of color and students experiencing housing instability.
²¹ <https://theweappstudio.com/>
²² For more information on the teaching staff involved in this program please see Appendix B.

<p>The Acting Lab</p>	<p>The Acting Lab created and taught by Steve Sneed is founded on the premise of Discipline, Confidence, and Motivation or DCM. He believes that acting requires DCM and that these qualities can be taught to young people through acting and used in other areas of their lives. Throughout the term, students practice acting skills and learn about culture and history through poetry and playwriting. For example, The Acting Lab teaches works by Maya Angelou and Nikki Giovanni. The Acting Lab is housed at South Lake High School.</p>
<p>Print 4 Life</p>	<p>Print 4 Life is an art program created by teaching artist Greg Thornton in collaboration with the organization Arts Corps²³, where students learn the skills of screen printing and creative entrepreneurship. The students go through every stage of the process, from conceptualization, drafting and revising, all the way to screen printing their creations by hand and selling their wares. Students are encouraged to learn from one another in a peer-teaching model. Print 4 Life is housed at Southeast Interagency Academy.</p>

²³ <https://artscorps.org/>

Figure 3. Ecosystem of CYD Secondary Arts Project



Over the course of this project, a number of staff departures occurred, which was a part of normal staff turnover for other opportunities or the need to relocate.²⁴

ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK & DATA

Another goal of this project was to develop an impact and assessment framework by which to evaluate the program.²⁵ The purpose in assessing the CYD Secondary Arts Project is to understand how arts curriculum and creative youth development (CYD) can foster positive experiences for students experiencing housing instability, and create strong programming in option and alternative high schools through the notion of a targeted universalism approach²⁶ We utilized a case study approach because

²⁴ There were several staff departures and administrative changes during the project. For example, Teaching Artists Jay O’Shea and Allyson Brown left to pursue other opportunities, and the principal of SEIA became the principal of the entire academy during the project.

²⁵ For an in-depth discussion of the methodology and data collection for this study please see the first paper of this project, *Creative Youth Development: Arts Strategies for Engaging Unstably Housed and Homeless Youth*.

²⁶ Targeted universalism means setting universal goals pursued by targeted processes to achieve those goals. Within a targeted universalism framework, universal goals are established for all groups concerned. The strategies developed to achieve those goals are targeted, based upon how different groups are situated within structures, culture, and across geographies to obtain the universal goal. Targeted universalism is goal-oriented, and the processes are directed in service of the explicit, universal goal.

the study includes complex processes involving individuals, relationships, and institutions. The case study method allows for a detailed analysis of specific phenomena by examining the results of several types of data collection comprehensively.

Classroom Observations

Ethnographic classroom observations were used to observe how creative youth development and artmaking came alive through the interactions of students and teaching artists. At the end of each observation, informal conversations were conducted to consult teaching artists about the progress of students (skills, attitudes, behaviors) in the program. The length of observations ranged from 1 – 2 ½ hours and each program was observed 3 times during each school year.

Student Survey

Students were given a survey²⁷ during schooltime in the first year of the project. The survey was designed to be accessible to youth and written in a language and format they can understand. The survey asks students to reflect on their perceived sense of belonging, community, communication skills, cross-cultural connections, leadership skills, use of feedback, artistic expression, programmatic evaluation, and relationship building. A post-pre survey design was used because the post-pre would allow all participants, regardless of when they started, to reflect on their experiences, and give a more consistent baseline. The survey was administered once²⁸.

Interviews with Teaching Artists and Administrators

In-depth interviews were conducted with teaching artists and administrators. Teaching artists were interviewed by one researcher about their general experience, goals for the following year, and the impact they saw arts education have on their students. Administrator²⁹ interviews were conducted by a pair of researchers about program updates, student attendance, and feedback about the program. Interviews lasted for about 1 hour. Interviews were completed via Zoom with teaching artists at the end of year two.

Research Insights

During observation, attention was paid to the teaching artist's pedagogical practice, instructional moves, art making process, structure of class time, and the content of instruction.

The intended approach of these visits was strictly observation, where the researcher and participants had little interaction with one another. Participant observation was kept to a minimum, however, on a few occasions teaching artists would invite the observer to participate in classroom activities.

<https://belonging.berkeley.edu/targeteduniversalism>

²⁷ For more information on the survey, please see Appendix C

²⁸ A total of 32 students filled out the survey out of 70 students, or a 45% response rate. For questions 1-7, n=32. Two students did not complete the survey. For questions 8-20, n=30. In some questions because of skipped responses, n=29.

²⁹ This includes school staff and leaders from WeAPP and Arts Corps for example.

Meetings & Focus Groups

Meetings were scheduled to renew communication between the impact and assessment team, administrators, and other relevant stakeholders at each high school. Meetings lasting 1 -2 hours took place at the beginning and end of the school year, resulting in a total of 4 meetings. The purpose of the meetings was to engage stakeholders with one another and collaboratively deliberate program objectives, students' progress, accomplishments, best practice, and potential changes. During meetings, administrators shared their perspectives on the impact of arts learning on students. Administrators also reported on how students experiencing housing instability were fairing with school and other aspects of their lives. Halfway through the school year, a focus group was conducted with all members of the impact and assessment team and current teaching artists. The focus group was convened to check in with teaching artists about their experiences and motivation as arts educators. Teaching artists shared their achievements and challenges working with students experiencing housing instability.

FINDINGS

In evaluating the CYD Secondary Arts Project, three sets of findings emerged at the institutional, program, and student level. While the separation of these domains is useful for understanding the multiple levels of impact of CYD, it is important to acknowledge that the outcomes are relational, in that it is the context of arts partnerships with schools that support teaching artists of color, that can produce environments that allow young people of color to thrive. Further, it is the unique identity and needs of BIPOC students experiencing housing instability that encourages teaching artists to use innovative pedagogical strategies to reach students which pushes administrators to institutionalize the use of CYD programming.

THE POWER OF BIPOC-LED & PLACE-BASED ARTS LEARNING

Program level outcomes were focused on the environmental and social contexts in which the CYD Secondary Arts Project took place: Having teaching artists of color teach students of color, practicing tenets of CYD, having students participate during the school day, and institutional investment in racial justice. Based on classroom observations and interviews with teaching artists and administrators we find that (1) teaching artists use culturally responsive pedagogical approaches to student learning, (2) teaching artists structured their programs with a focus on racial justice in a way that engendered belonging and community building, and (3) by creating authentic relationships with students, the school community became a place where students used artmaking to work through grief due to the loss of loved ones.

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning Pedagogy

Classroom observations revealed teaching artists were intuitively employing techniques of culturally responsive pedagogy. The purpose of culturally responsive pedagogy is to address educational injustice faced by students that are people of color, immigrants, poor, and linguistically diverse. Culturally

responsive pedagogy stems from theories of multicultural education and brings together culture and neuroscience to address the opportunity gap.³⁰ Generally, these techniques take an anti-racist and anti-oppressive pedagogical stance that incorporates cultural practice with brain-based learning strategies to allow marginalized students with increased opportunities for developing crucial learning skills. These are holistic approaches that engage with social-emotional, relational, and cognitive teaching. The observed teaching artists practiced culturally responsive teaching and learning approaches, such as cultural awareness, learning partnerships, and community building.

For example, Miss Jay was a teaching artist for the WeAPP program at SLHS. Miss Jay's pedagogical style incorporated social-emotional learning with creative expression. Using the WeAPP curriculum, Miss Jay created powerful exercises through writing, sharing, and performing. With simple prompts like *"Something I wish people understood about me is..."* or *"What are all the jobs you would like to do in the world?"* She created authentic opportunities for self-reflection and understanding which contributed to information processing. Miss Jay worked with students to create an inclusive and safe classroom for all students. Students feel comfortable enough to share their emotions and describe their lived experience. A dynamic instructor, she and the students were able to relate to one another. Miss Jay had a deep understanding of the challenges these young people face and used this to build rapport and trust with students. During a focus group, she explains that students experiencing homelessness do not have the privilege to believe the phrase 'everything will be okay', because instability is normalized. To counteract this, Miss Jay ensured students were seen and heard, which is a foundational component of culturally responsive teaching.

Steve Sneed is the teaching artist for The Acting Lab at SLHS. Mr. Sneed's classroom is a place where students can be themselves and develop their natural talent. Students began every class period by juggling colorful, silk scarves, a creative activity that focuses attention, practices motor-skill coordination, and gets students comfortable moving their bodies in space. By combining novel stimuli with physical stimulation, the activity triggers neural structures to grow more dendrites so the brain can do more complex information processing³¹. Additionally, this builds community by having a classroom ritual and also gives them the chance to play. Through persistence and encouragement Mr. Sneed encouraged students to invest in their creative work. Part of how he accomplished this is by incorporating culturally relevant material in the classroom. Almost all of the content students worked with were produced by writers and authors of color including Maya Angelou and Nikki Giovanni. Because Mr. Sneed embraced practice and repetition, students can watch themselves reflect on ways they persist by developing a growth mindset. When surveyed in year 1 of the project, most students across all programs reported they felt like they could be themselves, were heard, belonged, and recognized. The teaching artists across all programs cultivated a space where students mattered.

How did teaching artists access culturally responsive teaching? A critical aspect of the CYD Secondary Arts Project was that teaching artists of color were teaching students of color. The teaching artists have

³⁰ Zaretta Hammond, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*

³¹ Hammond, *Ibid.*

shared experiences and identities to those of their students. The teaching artists were able to authentically connect with student needs on a social-emotional level, beyond academic or arts instruction. However, the race and ethnicity of instructors does not necessarily guarantee that culturally responsive teaching and learning will happen. Principles of CYD and high quality arts programming also have significant overlap with the fundamentals of culturally responsive education. For example, both center student learning, seek to develop 'higher order' thinking skills, and think about the teacher-student relationship as a partnership. The analogous objectives of CYD and culturally responsive education coupled with shared identities between teacher and students resulted in an organic practice of culturally responsive teaching pedagogy.

Art for Racial Justice, Belonging, & Community Building

Art for racial justice is a reimagining of creative placemaking that centers belonging and inclusion in communities of color. Creative placemaking is a term that describes the effort of community actors coming together to enliven space with art as a means for public engagement³². Generally, creative placemaking is a tool utilized by city planners to enact projects with the unintended consequences of gentrification happening in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. To acknowledge the work that administrators, staff, teachers, and students invest into the creative sustenance of their schools, we challenge the notion of creative placemaking as a project of refinement for future white occupants. Instead, teaching artists focused on art for racial justice – an effort of community members to enliven space with art as a means of relationship building and intercommunity stewardship. With community belonging and inclusion, the classroom where students engage in artmaking then became the space where the absence of home transforms into the presence of acceptance, acknowledgement, and engagement.

Belonging and inclusion is evident in the built environments of the schools. At both SLHS and SEIA student artwork became a focal point of adornment along the walls and discursively in the stories of administrators and teaching artists. Next to each design is the student's name and a brief description of their inspiration. This visualization allows community members to learn about students through their creative process. The students of Print 4 Life also participate in community building. Print 4 Life brings students to community events where they print their designs onsite, allowing the public to see their process. SLHS students also participated in community events Through The Acting Lab, Steve Sneed was able to take students to see plays, *The Woman in Black* and *Nina Simone: 4 Women*, at the Seattle Repertory Theater. The field trip was so popular, when a researcher stopped by SLHS for observations, administrators said no students were present; Mr. Sneed had taken nearly the entire school to a play about Nina Simone. Administrators ask students to participate in artistic initiatives for the school community such as creating a mural or making a sweatshirt design.

Next school year, administrators at SLHS want to incorporate themes of belonging into student artmaking. Administrators astutely note that, at their cores, most students want to be witnessed, heard, and a part of something. Administrators believe that artmaking will help students grapple with

³² See Transportation Project of America, <https://www.artplaceamerica.org/transportation>

important questions like, “*What does it mean to belong to yourself and your community?*” Part of community building is advocating for positive social change. Students also used artmaking as a way to represent social justice issues that are important to them. In the Print 4 Life program, a student worked on creating an original Black Lives Matter piece for his school. Students also performed and wrote pieces at their high school graduation about Black Lives Matter³³. Students participated in making protest signs and posters when participating in marches and protests. Students of these programs use art to demonstrate their passion for social movements, often focusing on social inequalities like racial and gender justice. As one student said, “*Think about all of the world revolutions we’ve had and all the art that’s come out of it. Creativity is revolution.*” A strong takeaway from the CYD Secondary Arts Project is that students are using art to cultivate community and connection in the form of creative belonging. This, in turn, gives young people the ability to connect or make a home in their school communities.



Figure 4. Original BLM design for SEIA



Figure 5. “Girls supporting girls”

Finding Space for Loss, Grief and Transitions

When youth experience too much for the short lives they have lived – trauma, loss, instability, violence – the role of high quality arts education offers respite and a space for transformation and healing.. In the first page of the Interagency Academy Gray Wolves 2018-2019 book, there are smiling pictures of 6 BIPOC students, mostly young men and one young woman, each with their name under their photo. Upon first glance it may communicate that these students helped put the booklet together, but in reading the text a grim reality is uncovered. Former principal of Interagency Academy writes “Years at Interagency are filled with great joy, but also often punctuated by loss. This year is no different. We lost six members of our pack to tragedy, and we want to remember them in our hearts and in this book.” The principal’s words convey the regularity in which Interagency Academy faces student loss due to gun violence.

³³ To see these pieces performed please follow this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzuzA4G9RLA>

Another reality is the attrition from when students enter the criminal justice system, need to work instead of going to school, or when housing instability makes it too difficult to attend school.

Students used art as a way of memorialization, to represent relationships, grieve loved ones, and make gifts for family members. During the first year of this study, a beloved teacher at SEIA passed away. Students used art assignments to process their collective trauma and grief of losing a teacher who cared deeply for them. In their own way, whether it was writing poetry, using mixed-media design, or making posters, it was important to students to honor their former teacher with art. During the end of the second year, a student lost her boyfriend to gun violence. Even though class was no longer in session, the student reached out to her teaching artist and asked them to help her design art for his memorial. Students turn to artmaking and teaching artists when coping with loss. The precarious circumstances that students and their families navigate each day is why art as connection is powerful.

IMPACT TO STUDENTS: ACHIEVING PERSONAL GROWTH

Interpersonal Growth

There was consensus among administrators and teaching artists that students became more open and expressive during the school year because students developed their confidence and self-esteem. Administrators and teaching artists describe students coming out of their introversion and using their voice to speak with strength and power. Principal Rysemus of Southeast Interagency Academy described a young student who hardly said a word for the first 6 months. After participating in Print 4 Life, she became increasingly animated and more engaged. By the time the class began selling their screen prints at local markets, the same student was engaging customers, showing off Print 4 Life merchandise, and making sales. 80% (24/30) of students who took the survey indicated that their confidence increased and 73% (22/30) report that their ability to express who they are increased.

21st Century Skill Development

Communication: Classroom observations revealed that many students used their time in class as a space to process what was happening in their worlds. Naturally, when students used art to make sense of the world, habits like communication were cultivated. Students used artistic practices such as poetry, prose, and songwriting to practice self-expression and the communication of ideas and feelings. Survey data shows that 83% of students (25/30) reported that the class helped them to become a better listener and 80% of students (24/30) reported they could better

21ST CENTURY SKILLS

21st century skills refer to a broad range of competencies that are becoming increasingly important to successful outcomes in contemporary education, career, and civic life. Seattle Public Schools and The Creative Advantage focuses on the following skills.

Communication: To articulate thoughts and emotions effectively; to listen effectively.

Collaboration: To work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams.

Creativity: To create novel and useful innovations, ideas, and products.

express their ideas and feelings.

Critical Thinking: To elaborate, refine, analyze, and evaluate one's own or other's ideas.

Growth Mindset & Perseverance: Belief that intelligence and ability can be increased with effort; belief in one's own

Collaboration: 86% of students surveyed (26/30) reported that they became more comfortable working with people that were different from them, and 83% (25/30) reported that participating in the program helped them understand other people's point of view. Additionally, students were often shy or embarrassed to present their work. Teaching artists did their best to make students feel safe and comfortable, but it was really peer support and encouragement that allowed them to perform. Teaching artists reported collaboration between students when helping one another with projects. When students were especially adept in an area, like lettering for screen printing stencils, they would offer their services to help other students along.

Creativity and critical thinking: Students self-reported that they were able to make linkages across what they were creating in the CYD programs and other areas of their life. When students were asked on our survey if they were able to apply what they have learned to other classes or situations 66% (20/30) responded positively. When students were asked if they were able to connect things they created to other areas of their education and life, 90% (27/30) responded positively. Between what they had learned in their program and other classes or areas of life, the majority of students responded positively and could make those linkages.

Growth mindset and perseverance: When surveyed, 80% of students (24/30) reported that during the program they revised their work to improve it, and 70% of students (21/30) said they used feedback to accomplish this. Skills of growth mindset and perseverance naturally blossomed in the classroom. Because artmaking necessarily requires revision, students were able to model draft-critique-complete or practice-critique-perform at length. Students responded well to receiving feedback. During an observation of the WeAPP program, a student rehearsed a monologue in front of the class. Afterward the students and teaching artist offered constructive criticism, the student was asked to perform the monologue again, keeping in mind the feedback she had just received. Unphased, the student delivered, improving her performance. This act was met with loud applause from the other students in the classroom and was an example of how their work can become better.

Emerging Adulthood Readiness & Career-Connected Learning

Additionally, youth made art as a way to connect to their future selves and potential. In conjunction with developing 21st century skills, which are becoming increasingly valuable to an individual's employment, students were exposed to creative industry skills and entrepreneurship. A focus of Print 4 Life, one of the programs in the project, was how to be a creative entrepreneur. Teaching artist Greg Thornton encouraged leadership and community to his students through this practice. Mr. Thornton also used Print 4 Life to teach students about ways to make a career with art. Thornton worked with

interested students and created an entrepreneurship team. He spent time mentoring students on the basics of how to be a successful small business owner. Each week students would sell their wares at the local farmer's market or their own pop-up store. Students also participated in philanthropic events. Print 4 Life partnered with Patagonia to participate in a function about protecting the environment where students demonstrated their mobile screen printing skills. Print 4 Life used artmaking as a conduit to build both life and trade skills involving creative workforce development.

WeAPP has incorporated practical life skills into the writing and speaking program. Teaching artists designed curriculums to focus on concrete tasks like job interviews, resume writing, and filling out job applications. Further, WeAPP also planned to implement workshops on facilitating peer-to-peer discussion and navigating group discussions. These skills are all relevant to successful participation in future workforce. In the WeAPP class, teachers helped students do a mock launch of a make-up brand. They recorded a commercial, made marketing materials, and prototyped demonstration products. It was important to convey to students what it took to start up a business of their own. Students were also able to watch one of their Teaching Artists, Allyson Brown, perform in the play "Shout Sister Shout!". In The Acting Lab, students were exposed to professional performances. Teaching artist Steve Sneed taught young people how to compile a portfolio, bringing his own as an example. The administrators of this partnership believe that these career-connected learning strategies maximize arts learning and have noticeable and lasting impacts on student creative entrepreneurship and confidence. Building interpersonal skills, 21st century skills, emergent adult readiness, and career-connected learning are crucial for students of color experiencing housing instability because they will have better academic outcomes, be more likely to pursue a degree after high school, and increase their employability.

CONCLUSION

The CYD Secondary Arts Project was initiated as a way to increase access to arts education for young people of color experiencing housing instability in an effort to engage students during the school day. This report captures the context-dependent nuances of how CYD and arts education can work together to engage students of color experiencing housing instability attending any type of school. Previous literature has indicated that CYD and high quality arts instruction improves upon students' personal, social, educational, and cognitive skills, which can later impact major outcomes such as graduation, successful entry into the labor market, and pursuing higher education. Based on observational, interview, and survey data, the evaluation of the CYD Secondary Arts Project aligns with these findings. This is in part because the programs participating in the projects already met the standards of what high quality CYD programming is: asset based, youth driven, embedded in community, a safe space, and fun. The other part of success revolves around inherent characteristics of this case. The CYD Secondary Arts Project, was able to engage with students of color experiencing housing instability, by extending the core characteristics of CYD and including BIPOC focused, centered, and led instruction to students in alternative option high schools.

Improvements in life skills, community connections, and school engagement are crucial in a youth's development, but the radical potential of the CYD Secondary Arts Project comes in the use of a racial

justice lens in facilitating arts learning. By focusing in on BIPOC students that may experience housing instability, the opportunity and access of arts education and CYD becomes a strategy to move against systemic injustice that plagues BIPOC students whose families struggle with housing stability, schools that face systemic underfunding, students who could not get their needs met in comprehensive high schools, and communities struggling with poverty. Some of the most powerful work of CYD comes in the capacity it creates to disrupt ever widening disparities between marginalized and privileged communities. In developing skills, CYD works to close opportunity gaps found between low-income students of color and resource-rich white students. By embedding arts education in the community, young people are encouraged to invest and care for the places they call home. By having successful BIPOC teaching artists in the classroom, students of color are able to envision their own future success. The incorporation of racial justice into CYD frameworks and use of arts learning is essential to the CYD Secondary Arts Project.

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Introduction

This addendum explores the work of teaching artists and community arts organizations during COVID-19 in the CYD Secondary Arts Project. [The CYD Secondary Arts Project](#) was a pilot program implemented by a partnership between [Seattle Public Schools](#), [The Creative Advantage](#), and community based arts programs that took place during the school day, with a focus on engaging BIPOC students experiencing [housing instability](#) in Seattle. The project worked with South Lake High School and Southeast Interagency Academy and three arts programs, The Acting Lab, [WeAPP](#), and Print 4 Life¹. To better understand the innovative strategies arts educators are using to have an accessible arts curriculum, three teaching artists from the CYD Secondary Arts Project were interviewed. Further, successful online arts programming from The Creative Advantage and WeAPP was reviewed. Arts educators, teaching artists, and community arts organizations have been working to provide quality and interactive material to students during the pandemic. Teaching artists described the roll-out of online learning as having degrees of success and challenge, with thematic focus on successful processes of adaptation, difficulty with staying in contact with students, and the importance of relationship building work with students. Finally, BIPOC students experiencing housing instability have remained engaged in CYD practices as a way to express themselves around issues of COVID-19 and the social movements against police brutality and Black Lives Matter.

Innovations and Strategies

Transitioning to remote learning has been especially challenging for low-income communities. K-12 students do not necessarily have access to computers, internet, or space for online school². Seattle Public Schools, teachers, and administrators have been working diligently to help bridge disparities in access to educational technology, but also provide basic

¹ For a detailed account of the CYD Secondary Arts Project please see: [LINK TO PAPER 2 WHEN READY]

² <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-08-13/online-learning-fails-low-income-students-covid-19-left-behind-project>

needs of students that were previously provided by attending school in person (two hot meals, shelter during the day, access to other community services, etc.). The school district has been working on setting up and giving out wifi hotspots, providing internet, giving computers, and setting up meal distribution centers.

Art Kits: Educators have created 'art kits' that are passed out at various resource hubs around the city. SPS has reached out to The Creative Advantage, a city-wide collective impact initiative that includes the district, the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, Seattle Foundation, and more than 100 community arts partners, housed within the Office of Arts and Culture, to help ensure the delivery of equitable access to arts education for all young people. The Creative Advantage began a video content project called Creative Advantage Online Arts ³, so that teaching artists could record lessons and youth can access them. The current repository contains 125 art lessons by 30 different teaching artists. Further, The Creative Advantage is hosting virtual artists residencies in partner schools and is working with SPS to provide all access arts streaming and broadcasting outside of school time. All three of the programs that are a part of the CYD Secondary Arts Project have completed video modules.

Teaching Artist Perspectives

Even though each program had their own curve balls, there were three consistent answers from teaching artists when asked about online programming: Teaching artists reported that it was **challenging to initially contact students**, it was **difficult for teaching artists to maintain student participation**, and the **students they were able to keep in contact with were students they had built trusting relationships with prior to the pandemic**. Greg Thornton's Print 4 Life program is especially valuable for teaching young people how to become creative entrepreneurs. During the regular school year, students were regularly going to gigs like farmer's markets where they made their own money for selling their wares. Because of the

³ <https://www.creativeadvantageseattle.org/online-arts/>

pandemic these events have been postponed. Greg discussed how it was difficult for some of his students because they had large orders of 250 screen-prints and other events cancelled. This not only prevented students from participating in CYD programming, but also the money they were to receive from the successful gigs. Greg also discussed how his teaching medium was impacted. "You can't do screen-printing online.", he said when discussing how he transitioned from in class to online learning. Because of this, the remainder of the class ended when schools closed. Instead, his students have access to arts material through The Creative Advantage including modules he created.

For The Acting Lab and WeAPP programs, the transition to online learning was turbulent. Despite administrators and teachers' best effort, it took longer than expected to create **clear and consistent expectations** of how to deliver material to students and for students to engage with that material. Various platforms like Schoology, Zoom, Padlet, and FaceTime were tested in various capacities by the teaching artists. Steve noted that before school officially closed, the students had low morale. They had already begun to worry about their changing circumstances. Students reported to teaching artists that there was not consistent messaging about what 'closing school' actually meant. Steve said some of his students took it as the school year was over. For all of these reasons, it was difficult to reach out to students.

Steve and Jessie noted that they were only able to connect with about a quarter of the students on their roster. Steve noted that some of his students became gainfully employed to help their families make ends meet. When students struggle with housing instability, school may not be a priority when their family is put in crisis. Greg mentioned that keeping in contact with his students became difficult because they 'were in survival mode'. Steve found that no matter what the platform, students were not logging on for their lessons. Eventually, he took to contacting individual students and their families directly to increase participation. Once in a rhythm he had 3-4 students that would consistently attend online class. Jessie echoed similar sentiments about only having 2-3 students that would regularly participate.

What is important to clarify here is that the students that ended up having strong participation during online learning were those who had already been working closely and collaboratively with the teaching artists. Greg kept in contact with students that were a part of his leadership and entrepreneurship team. Jessie said that the students he engaged with during remote learning were those he was already talking to frequently prior to the pandemic starting. Steve stayed connected with students that were already working on individual projects with him. The ability for teaching artists to stay connected to emphasizes the importance of foundational relationships and mentorship of students in CYD programs. One reason mentorship with teaching artists is so valuable is it creates a stable and direct line of communication between the teaching artist and student. For students who are living in vulnerable situations, this line of communication is crucial in maintaining student engagement⁴.

The Persistence of CYD

Despite the ups and downs of the transition to distance learning, another thread that ties these 3 programs together is the persistence of CYD. When student's lives were thrown into chaos, CYD persisted. Greg gave students design prompts around COVID-19. He is currently working with students to create a digital yearbook with a special emphasis on student activism and protest participation. WeAPP quickly got their programs up and running. They are offering digital open-mics and drop-in hours. Steve worked with graduating students to prepare special pieces for their digital graduation. It is important to remember that COVID was not the only event disturbing the lives of students. BIPOC students and their families, also had to contend with increased and continued publishization of police brutality against Black men and women and the ensuing social justice uprising against this violence. This was another way students remained connected to CYD during remote learning. Students wanted to make creative works that reflected their position in the Black Lives Matter movement and their experiences with the

⁴ It is also important to note that economic responses to the COVID-19 crisis also put teaching artists at risk of losing their jobs. Many artists have been out of work since the beginning of the pandemic.

criminal justice system and other penal institutions. One student wrote a poem called “I Can’t Breathe”, a tribute to George Floyd, which she not only performed at her graduation, but she also received a prize from WeAPP for her work. Students also participated in sign-making for various children and youth marches around the city. No matter what was happening in their lives, CYD was a tool for them to make sense of the world.

Conclusion

It is well known that COVID-19 has exacerbated social inequalities, and in the U.S. context this is especially targeted towards Black and low-income communities⁵. At the moment, there is little data that describes how BIPOC students experiencing homelessness are weathering this moment. [The School House Connection](#) encourages administrators to reach out to [McKinney-Vento](#) offices, and school liaison officers to ensure these students' needs are being met and they are able to continue to work towards graduation. This is an especially crucial time to keep engagement high, as housing instability increases, so does the likelihood of students dropping out of the school system altogether⁶.

⁵ Pirtle, W. N. L. (2020). Racial capitalism: A fundamental cause of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic inequities in the United States. *Health Education & Behavior*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7301291/>

⁶ Ingram, E. S., Bridgeland, J. M., Reed, B., & Atwell, M. (2017). Hidden in Plain Sight: Homeless Students in America’s Public Schools. *Civic Enterprises*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED572753.pdf>