

The Social Emotional Learning Achieved by

in the mix

2021-2022

report

A program of the New Jersey
Performing Arts Center

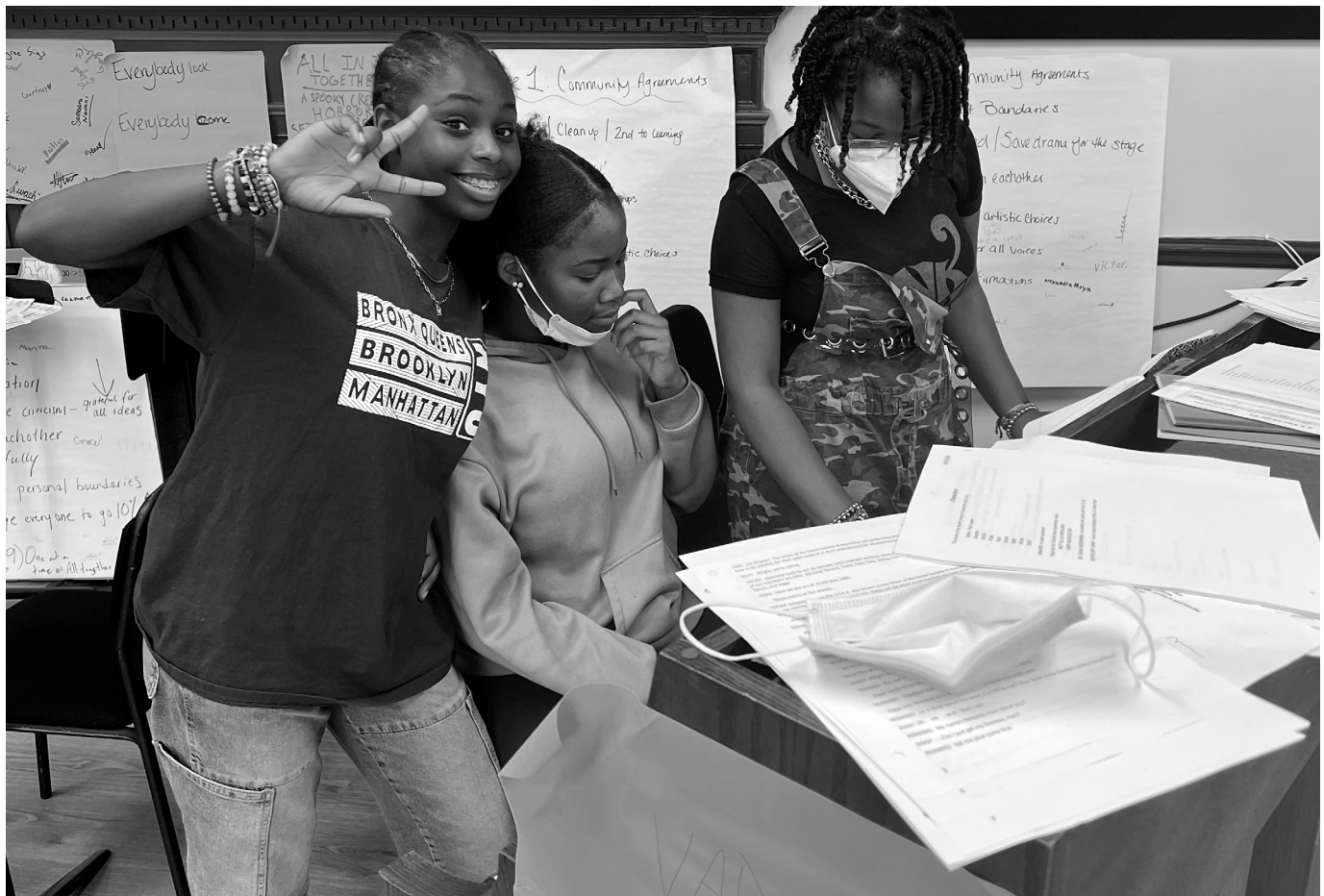
“ I use activism every time I write poetry. NJPAC has really helped me express my feelings and stand up for people. I have already done this before, but now I am better at understanding both sides... Through our talks at In the Mix on different issues, I have been helped to see the person showing hate is also going through the same things. We are not excusing their actions, but it is good to know both points of view. ”

—In the Mix Student Participant

arts
education
njpac
discover. create. grow.



what we do



The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) began as a vision for the State to have its own world-class performing arts, cultural, arts education and civic center. Since its opening season in 1997, NJPAC has attracted more than 10 million visitors, including approximately 1.9 million children and families. Each season, its arts learning initiatives engage more than 75,000 students in schools, in NJPAC conservatory and on its stages.

During the 2020-2021 season, NJPAC reached approximately 47,000 students and families from Greater Newark and beyond.

In the Mix is a student-driven, collaborative, multidisciplinary program with a civic engagement focus. It was conceived as a safe space for students to discuss and produce art as activism while building social and emotional skills. In the Mix emerged from parents expressing a desire for more opportunities for their children to collaborate with other students across multiple NJPAC arts education genres. The intent is for students to recognize their potential to become community-engaged artists and leaders, and establish their voices in creative, civic initiatives to make the world a better place.

a hub for creativity and social-emotional growth

In 2021-2022, *In the Mix* was held in person for the first time. The students:

- appeared confident in themselves and their voice,
- expanded their individual and teamwork skills, and
- reinforced their commitment to using art for social activism.

in the mix specs, 2021-22

- **WHO:** A teaching artist, licensed social worker and two staff facilitators worked weekly with five to eight students. The students also participated in other NJPAC programs, including Musical Theater and Act Out Loud.
- **WHEN:** October 16, 2021 – May 7, 2022
- **HOW OFTEN:** One hour; 21 Saturday sessions



“ I joined In the Mix to see what I could do to help the world. I have always seen myself as someone who can stand up for other people, especially in school when I witness bullying. ”

—In the Mix Student Participant



highlights

FALL SEMESTER

In the fall semester, students designed and produced a podcast. They used art to portray their social justice concerns with media to amplify their voices.

Student concerns included:

- racial discrimination,
- bullying,
- gender equality,
- politics,
- the difference between cultural appropriation and appreciation, and
- the challenges of being a student during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Podcast Training, students learned:

- Podcast formats, structure and technology,
- How to develop a podcast script, and
- How to perform background research,
- How to integrate art as activism into their questions.

“ As a parent, I want to thank you for everything you have powered into our children. They are more expressive at home. They are thinking critically about things. And even though they are still shy, they are growing in ways that they themselves don't understand yet. And we truly appreciate it. ”

—NJPAC Parent

Additionally, students learned **Performance and Audience Etiquette**. They shared original poems and other creative work while practicing how to command the audience's attention. They recorded and produced three podcast episodes:

episode 1

How can music make the world a better place?
Interview with Christian McBride.

episode 2

Arts Education: What are some important messages or issues you deal with in your work?
Interview with Lisette Santiago.

episode 3

The Inside Out Project: If you had the chance, what advice would you give to your younger self?
Interview with Emma Berrebi.

“ ... It ain't never gonna disappear
Until they hear us
Instead of throwing us under the bus
They let us discuss
Without looks of disgust
Instead, they trust ”

—Excerpt from original student rap



“ This is the In the Mix podcast when we talk about art as activism and real world problems from a different perspective: passion... emboldened... fun... compassion... it takes a village... community expression... keep going... inspirational opportunity...unity... ”

—Student podcast intro

the podcasts

The students designed and produced three podcasts in November, December and April. They were excited to learn from those interviewed. They developed the interview questions and took turns asking them.

EXCERPT FROM PODCAST 1: November 6, 2021

How can music make the world a better place?

“I hope people are always aware enough to listen to all the ways people around the world express themselves. It is beautiful to experience all these different types of music other than simply the music you are accustomed to hearing. Be curious. When you learn about different types of music, you are learning about different types of people, cultures and ways of thinking. You become bigger. Your mind becomes bigger. Your heart becomes bigger. I think this is how music changes the world.”

—Excerpt from interview with Christian McBride¹

“ Please think about all the social issues we talked about today or that you hear on the streets, or that you are talking about with your family. And please, in any way you can, put your word and your activism out there. We love you all and thank you for coming out and enjoying our podcast. ”

—Student podcast outro

EXCERPT FROM PODCAST 2: December 18, 2021

What important messages or issues do you deal with in your work? “As an artist, it is really important for me to advocate for myself. We artists are such a vital part of our culture. We need our artists; we need them so much. I want to see change in gender inequality. Some men in our field are pretty inconsiderate in how a woman should be treated. Women are strong artists and deserve more credit. I want to be viewed as an artist first before anything. This is important to me.”

—Excerpt from interview with Lisette Santiago²

“ I went to this really cool social justice program at NJPAC. It was so awesome. You got to show your talents and talk about important things happening in the real world. You can truly express how you feel... If you want to be the next voice of In the Mix, go to our website and sign up today. ”

—Excerpt from student commercial

¹Christian McBride is an American jazz bassist, composer and arranger, and an eight-time Grammy Award winner. The interview was conducted after his master class.

²Lisette Santiago is percussionist, vocalist, and educator, noted for her playing the Bata drum. She is an activist for raising the voice of women in the arts.

highlights

(continued)

SPRING SEMESTER

The Spring semester focused on developing an art installation as part of the Inside Out Project.

Renowned French Street artist JR uses his camera to show the world its true face by pasting photo portraits across massive outdoor canvases: walls, buildings, billboards, and rooftops across the globe, most notably in places of social conflict. He puts his controversial artworks on the streets so local people who do not go to museums can be impacted positively or otherwise. In 2011, during his first TED talk, JR launched "Inside Out," a global project giving people worldwide the chance to make public art statements in the form of black-and-white portraits that are blown up and pasted on spaces. Inside Out has been displayed on the Hong Kong footbridge, Times Square's sidewalks in New York and the Pantheon's dome in Paris. More than 450,000 people from 141 countries have joined JR in the project since 2011.

When Emma Berrebi³ facilitated a workshop with In the Mix students on April 30, she led a discussion about how this art form is being used to change the world.

“ It doesn’t matter if the photos are displayed temporarily, that some might tear them down or put graffiti on them. That’s part of the project: people presenting a message, others reacting and then having a conversation. The life of the photograph is part of the action. ”

—Emma Berrebi

Students were asked, “What do you want the audience to think?”

- One student described wanting the audience to approach the portraits with curiosity.
- Another student mentioned wanting the audience to think about the meaning of the portraits and find each meaning like a puzzle piece.

Emma also informed students they could paint or write on the portraits after it was printed.

Students were given the following rules for portraits:

- no animals,
- no sunglasses (we want to see your eyes),
- one person per photo,
- one photo per person, and
- the photo must be taken in a portrait frame



³Emma Berrebi is the education program manager for Inside Out. She guides groups around the world in producing and displaying original works of photography that smash stereotypes. Emma came to interview the students for their project; and the students decided to interview her.

highlights

(continued)

ART AS ACTIVISM

Emma challenged students with the following questions:

Together the students concluded:

WE WANT EQUALITY FOR ALL IDENTITIES IN EVERY WAY.

"Inside Out: Art as Activism" was created by students as a photo installation featuring NJPAC friends, families and staff.

Portraits with quotes. Students selected inspirational quotes to substantiate the images utilized for the project. They strengthened teamwork skills and realized group cohesion as:

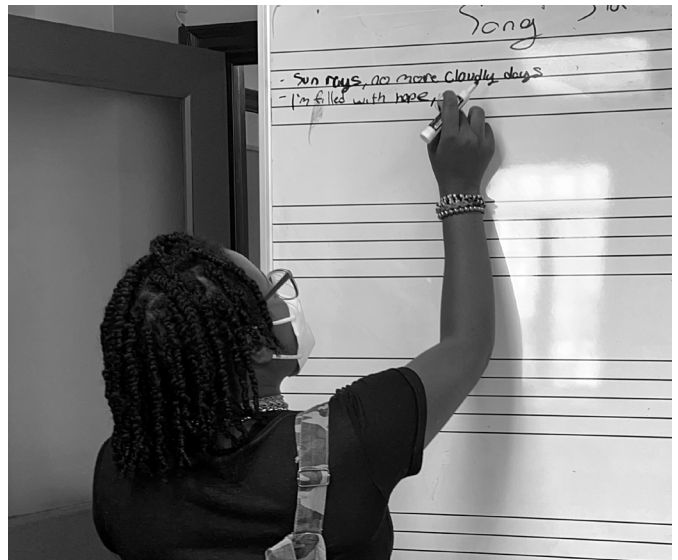
- One student said their quote described how “words could hurt people or help fix their feelings.”
- Another student conveyed the message, “Don’t change; you’re beautiful.”
- Other students wanted to convey enjoyment in expressing love and the importance of setting healthy boundaries by saying, “No means no.”

EXCERPT FROM PODCAST 3: April 30, 2022

If you had the chance, what advice would you give to your younger self? “Be fearless. Be okay with being uncomfortable so long as you know it will contribute to your growth. When I work with younger students, one of my first tasks is to help them come out of their shells. Whether it is due to trauma or just feeling shy, you are our future. Your voice is important. Your perspective is just as valuable as others. And you should always know that you are always where you need to be and that your voice has a place there as well. We are all masterpieces in development. Always growing and refining and being better versions of ourselves.”

—Excerpt from interview with Emma Berrebi

Students spoke with confidence and excitement throughout the April 30 workshop with Emma.



the big event :

portrait installation & final share out

“ This Saturday, the Inside Out Team visited the New Jersey Performing Arts Center to listen to the voices of politically engaged youth. Despite their young age, they have a great understanding of the world around them and demand equality and acceptance for all identities. ”

—Inside Out Project Blog-writer



On Saturday, May 7, students implemented the Final Share Out for an intimate audience of family, friends, and NJPAC staff. The Inside Out Project was unveiled, and everyone was invited to view the portraits.



the big event :

portrait installation & final share out

(continued)

Two students recited poetry. One poem focused on the theme of Black Lives Matter, while the other focused on the theme of identity, which included words by each In the Mix student and facilitator describing themselves.

“ I personally think I've grown a lot. When we first started In the mix in 2019, no one really knew what it was supposed to look like. As the program grew, so did I. I was able to express myself and talk about matters that really meant something to me. I made friends that will last me a lifetime. I personally helped younger kids understand what's going on in the world and just express their feelings and listen to others. Some opinions you might not agree about, but it's OK because no one in the world is going to have the same opinion. ”

—Returning Student



“ ...They don't want to hear the flip side
The side that comes with pride
We need to hide
The side that sees the good
Not just some thugs in the hood
The side we don't have to worry
About being a menace
Or being given a larger sentence
Come on, can't you see
You don't want this fire inside of me
This is a time in history
We never thought to see
Of blacks and whites
Both getting to great heights... ”

—Excerpt from original student rap at final Share Out

our teaching artists pay close attention

Voices of NJPAC Teaching Artists about SEL Growth



Alizah wrote and performed a poem at this year's showcase in which she highlighted and honored every person in the program. She always wrote poems about herself and wanted to compose one as a community member for the first time. During the third podcast, when the interviewee admitted to bouts of depression as a teenager, she thoughtfully took the initiative to delve deeper into that topic and extracted much more meaning from the podcast.

Trinity is fiercely intelligent, which is why she made such a great host for the podcasts. She made an effort to step back and give room to others this Spring semester. This was a big step up from previous semesters, where we had to reign her in constantly. She is very thoughtful about issues of race and the environment. She has said that In the Mix is a safe space where she feels most comfortable being herself! She is poised to be a powerful voice of her generation with the right guidance.

Houston was a virtual student from Canada. He contributed awesome music to the podcasts. He was always a pleasure to work with. It's hard to engage the virtual students in the same way as the in-person ones, so we must find more ways to incorporate them. I think virtual students could come on early or stay late so we can focus on their needs and contributions better.

*Note: Names throughout this report are fictitious to protect student anonymity.

our teaching artists

pay close attention

(continued)



Avery always brings great positive energy to the group, contributing where she can. It comes naturally to her to be in a support role and play it safe. I'd like to see her take charge in the group and go outside her comfort zone. She identifies racial equity as the social issue of most concern to her.

Jaylene is very quiet in group sessions but remains open to trying new things. She is a fantastic writer, and her quiet ways are left behind when she gets the opportunity to perform. Her powerful voice on the pod recordings and at the final share starkly contrasted how reserved she is in the classes. Looking forward, I wonder how she can build confidence and bring out that impactful voice more often?

Amayah, at first, sat back and allowed others to take up the conversational space. Over time, she got more comfortable speaking and started to find her way in and speak her mind more and more. She showed deep interest in social justice and made bold statements of her beliefs.

Nakayla was a new In the Mix student finding her place. She was not as talkative as other students but occasionally had strong opinions on the discussion topics. She was comfortable being recorded for the podcast. I hope she returns so she can unlock her potential as a team member.

