

# Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network Program Evaluation

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<b>Overview</b>
<p><i>This report summarizes key findings from a qualitative analysis of AIYN survey data collected between 2015 and 2018. Data were analyzed to determine:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The impact of AIYN programming on participants' attitudes and skill acquisition (<b>participant evaluation</b>)</i></li> <li>• <i>The perceived success and impact of AIYN programming for participants (<b>program evaluation</b>)</i></li> </ul>
<b>Results</b>
<p><b>Participant Evaluation</b></p> <p>Survey responses indicate that participants developed feelings of self-confidence/self-efficacy, social emotional skills, interpersonal skills, and hope for the future. In addition, participants learned a specific educational or artistic skill, such as writing, mural painting, or drawing techniques.</p> <p><b>Program Evaluation</b></p> <p>Both participants and probation officers considered AIYN programming to be successful and/or to have a positive impact. Probation staff detected positive changes in participants as a result of participation in AIYN programming. Both participants and probation officers expressed a desire for AIYN programming to continue.</p>
<b>Significance</b>
<p><b>Did AIYN meet its objectives?</b></p> <p>These findings align with core AIYN's objectives, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To promote collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking</li> <li>• To help participants meet CA Common Core standards and Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) standards through project-based learning</li> <li>• To promote self-awareness, self-efficacy, relationship skills, coping skills, and effective management of emotional and behavioral challenges</li> </ul>
<b>Limitations</b>
<p>Small sample sizes and uncategorizable data presented challenges for rigorous assessment of participants' and probation officers' survey responses.</p>
<b>Recommendations</b>
<p>Evaluation efforts can be improved through consistent collection and review of data and through continual discussion among AIYN staff, teaching artists, and researchers. When possible, data collection and analysis methods should align</p>

with arts evaluation best-practices as determined by existing studies.

## **Background**

Evaluations of youth arts programs have identified several important indicators that can be used to measure program effectiveness. For example, arts programs can help participants learn new skills, acknowledge personal development and growth, and encourage positive interactions among youth, all of which promote coping and management of difficult emotions (Farnum & Schaffer, 1998). Other programs aim to create opportunities for youth to improve cooperation and communication skills with peers and adults, to facilitate appropriate expression of anger, and to promote goal accomplishment (Clawson and Coolbaugh 2001; Ezell & Levy 2003). Arts programs with incarcerated women have been shown to strengthen participants' social networks, peer-to-peer relations, and emotional awareness, allowing participants to experience a deeper connection to their "inner emotional and psychological state" (Walsh, Rutherford & Crough, 2013). Identifying the impact of arts programming on participants' attitudes, behaviors, and subjective experiences can help arts organizations enhance program activities and ensure long-term success (Farnum & Schaffer, 1998).

## **Methods**

Qualitative analysis was conducted using data collected from two different Debrief Surveys with AIYN participants and from a Probation Survey with probation staff members. Data were examined using an inductive approach—a process that aims to identify patterns and themes that emerge within data instead of trying to fit data to match a pre-existing coding frame or answer a pre-formed research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Following Braun and Clarke's six-step process of thematic analysis, codes were developed through repeated review and categorization. Themes were defined through review of arts-based programming evaluation literature and discussion with AIYN staff. **Appendix A** lists survey questions and total number of responses analyzed.

## **Results: Participant Evaluation**

Responses indicate that participants gained feelings of self-confidence and self-efficacy, social emotional skills, interpersonal skills, and a hope for the future. Many participants also listed a specific educational or artistic skill that they acquired through AIYN programming. By granting participants a positive view of themselves and their capabilities, AIYN programming can provide a transformative experience for participants that has long-lasting benefits.

### **Self-Efficacy/ Self-Confidence**

Participants who discovered a talent, skill, ability, or quality in themselves that may be considered a personal strength or allow them to achieve their goals were considered to exhibit "self-efficacy/self-confidence." These responses ranged from general reflections on one's capabilities to the discovery of a specific skill or talent, such as writing or painting. Self-efficacy can result from a personal experience of mastery, a vicarious experience of seeing others succeed, the verbal acknowledgement that one has the ability to succeed, or a personal evaluation of one's level of anxiety and vulnerability (Bandura, 1989). For incarcerated individuals, developing feelings of self-efficacy may facilitate a positive self-concept in which individuals see themselves as "more than the charges brought against them" (Lazarri, Amundson & Jackson, 2005). Further,

developing a sense of responsible autonomy by accomplishing the goals one has set for oneself can facilitate adolescents' successful transition into adulthood (Steinberg, Chung & Little, 2004).

**Evidence of Self-Efficacy / Self-Confidence**

"I have a lot of potential and abilities to learn new things"

"I learned that I could be patient if I wanted to"

"I am better than I thought in painting"

"I can do a lot of things, I am able to challenge myself into doing more than I expect. I learned new drawing techniques and I learned I can express my mind thru paper."

"That I can do anything and be confident"

"That I have a lot of knowledge and wisdom and that I'm very talented. Yes, I learned from Mrs. Roberta and Mr. Jimmy to believe in myself to success in the future and life as well."

"I learned that it's not about where I am from but where I'm headed. Yes, teaching artist helped me explain my feelings."

**Social Emotional Skills**

Participants who learned how to be more aware of their own emotions, how to manage negative emotions (i.e., anger), and how to effectively express their emotions were thought to exhibit "social emotional skills." This definition aligns with the concept of "social emotional learning" articulated in studies of adolescent education and includes self-management/self-control, self-insight/reflection, problem-solving, and social/cultural awareness (Durlak et al., 2011). Social emotional learning has been shown to improve youth's academic performance, improve attitudes and classroom behaviors, increase feelings of belonging, and reduce emotional distress (Beyer, 2017; Meunier, 2017). Youth may continue to experience the benefits of having developed such an important skillset for up to 18 years post-intervention (Taylor et al., 2017).

**Evidence of Social Emotional Skills**

<b>Emotional Awareness and Self-Expression</b>	<b>Self-Reflection</b>	<b>Stress Reduction and Coping</b>
"I've learned that I carry a lot of pain in me that I wouldn't really share with others."	"It helps me think of myself and have a outside perspective in the things I do and how I act."	"Yes, this art program has helped me control my anger"
"Yes it helped me maintain my behavior being at this camp."	"No, just that it helped me better understand myself."	"Yes this program helped me leave negativity in its tracks."
	"Yes it has helped me	"Yes, it helps me control

<p>"I can forgive"</p> <p>"Yes, the people surprised me by teaching me how to love again."</p> <p>"Yes I never opened up to people like I did in Street Poets."</p>	<p>become a better person and realize I'm not the only one going through same things."</p>	<p>some of my actions and emotions by just writing them down"</p> <p>"It helped me express my feelings in the right way"</p>
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### **Interpersonal Skills**

Participants who learned how to communicate or interact with others in a positive, non-confrontational way, had an increased understanding of or tolerance for others, expressed an ability to trust others, or felt supported by AIYN teaching artists and/or their peers were considered to exhibit "interpersonal skills." This theme aligns with the AIYN objective of improving participants' communication and collaboration skills and practicing non-judgmental reflection. Developing interpersonal skills can be an important intermediary step towards increased self-efficacy and pride (Lazarri, Amundson & Jackson, 2005). Moreover, improving their ability to communicate with and to trust others can allow participants to form more meaningful bonds with adults and their peers, facilitating the development of a strong social support network (Tangeman & Hall, 2011). Interpersonal skills may be considered a component of social emotional skills (Durlak et al., 2011). The ability to relate well to others is an important aspect of psychosocial development and can promote responsible decision-making in the long-term for incarcerated youth (Steinberg, Chung & Little, 2004).

**Evidence of Interpersonal Skills**

"I have patience and tolerance for others..."

"It has helped me build a relationship with people I don't really get along with."

"I learned that I'm not alone in this life there's people to help me, in many ways."

"I never thought people would actually find interest in my poems or things I write about. It surprised me how there's people out there who can really listen."

"We help each other we work like a team we stay focus, thanks to the program"

"We learned to collaborate with each other"

**Hope**

Participants who saw themselves engaging in meaningful activities or achieving success and/or stability in their future were considered to have "hope." Although difficult to measure, hope is an important quality to identify in incarcerated populations because it is often linked to goal-setting and greater awareness of the consequences of one's actions. For incarcerated youth, particularly youth of color, detention is an experience that removes "hope for a good future" (Lane et al., 2002) by disrupting processes of educational attainment and creating barriers to securing stable employment (Steinberg, Chung & Little, 2004). Observing and documenting expressions of hope in incarcerated youth helps counteract "deficit-centered scholarship", which emphasizes the adverse effects of detention on youth psychology and health outcomes and thus fails to present a complete picture of how youth perceive and navigate challenging environments (Wood, Kamper & Swanson, 2018).



**Evidence of Hope**

***Where do you see yourself five years from now?***

"Accomplished and making progressive use of my time"

"In college, having a job, a house, staying out of trouble."

"Working as a forensic scientist"

"Being a better person"

"Inspired to live"

"I see myself working at homeboy industries doing murals"

### **Artistic/Educational Skill**

Participants who learned a specific artistic technique or a skill important to their success in school (i.e., writing, public speaking) were considered to have acquired an “artistic/educational Skill.” Measuring art knowledge outcomes is common in arts-based youth program evaluation (Farnum & Schaffer, 1998) and may be connected to increased self-esteem, discipline, and feelings of accomplishment (Clawson & Coolbaugh, 2001). By teaching participants new skills or strengthening existing skills, arts programs create opportunities for participants to discover unrecognized or under-appreciated talents and to take pride in themselves and their accomplishments (Ezell & Levy, 2003). In this way, developing a specific artistic or educational skill is linked to feelings of self-efficacy and self-confidence.

### **Evidence of Artistic/Educational Skill**

“I learned how to paint and shade cactus”

“I learned how to do a mural and that taught me that art can have many different meanings for a big piece of art”

“I have learned that I am actually a really good writer”

“Yes, it helped me in school. I used my writing skills in English.”

“I learned that I am able to tell stories in front of a lot of people”



### **Results: Program Evaluation**

Both participants and probation staff believed that AIYN programming had a positive impact. Participants spoke highly about their teachers and program activities and expressed a desire for the programming to continue. Many were impressed by the teachers’ artistic skills or commented on the positive encouragement and support they felt they had received from teaching artists. 80% (58/72) of respondents to the 2015-16 Debrief Survey believed that the program met their expectations compared to 20% (14/72), who felt that the program had no impact and/or offered a vague respond.

Debrief Survey (2015-16)	Debrief Survey (2018)	Probation Survey (2018)
<p>"It really blew my mind"</p> <p>"Yes it met my expectations by believing more in myself"</p> <p>"Yes, it went above and beyond my expectations"</p> <p>"Yes it help me a lot; yes Fabian he has skill in art."</p> <p>"It did [meet my expectations] because I experienced something new"</p>	<p>"My teaching artist were amazing and I will really miss them"</p> <p>"im going to miss these crazy funny people"</p> <p>"It was fun, cool and I learned new things"</p> <p>"I really liked this class and I want it to come back"</p> <p>"I wanna keep participating it was inspirational"</p> <p>"I loved hanging out. I felt like I belonged somewhere for once in my life"</p>	<p>"Minors appeared to feel more comfortable with speaking in front of groups. Minors also appeared to be more self-confident"</p> <p>"I observed minors who were usually reserved and introverted exhibit signs of increased interest in participating in group activities. The minors actually smiled when taking part in many of the activities"</p> <p>"Some expressed a desire to continue to pursue acting/theater. The days that the program was here a few minors behavior were positive in anticipation of the program."</p> <p>"The youth learn to work collaboratively and are more open to the arts"</p>

The majority of probation staff also considered AIYN to have a positive impact, as indicated by the observation of positive changes in participants, their desire for AIYN programming to continue, and their response of "yes" to the question, "Do you think the AIYN's art program was successful?" 86% of respondents (12/14) confirmed that they would like the arts organization to continue offering programming at their facility while four respondents requested greater frequency and/or continuation of AIYN programming in response to the open-ended question, "What can be improved?"

28.6% (4/14) of respondents considered AIYN to be "fairly successful." It is possible that limited resources and training opportunities at specific sites contributed to these views. For example, two officers from Scudder mentioned a need for resources and supplies in response to the question, "What can be improved?" Another officer (location unknown) suggested, "The art staff needs more orientations on how to work with incarcerated youth. Also, more orientation on probation's policy's regarding boundaries."

<b>Scudder Comments</b>		
	<b><i>What can be improved?</i></b>	<b><i>Any additional comments?</i></b>
<b>Officer 1</b>	"I would love to see the program continue. The Youth that were a part of Street Poets was disappointed that the program wasn't on a	"Street Poets was awesome and it allowed staff that Supervised the program to know and understand our Youth in a different light. It also allowed our Youth to view staff differently that

	continuous loop. In addition, other Youths wanted to participated after Street Poets left our facility”	were an active participants. The program is extremely successful if you have one staff that oversees the supervision of the group. The reason for that thought mentioned above is that it creates a trust factor that our Youth feel comfortable with opening up about serious topics that they face, have faced and will face in their life.”
<b>Officer 2</b>	“The Camp requires resources”	N/A
<b>Officer 3</b>	“Safety and security of supplies”	“Organization of the closing at the end of class time”

### **Limitations**

When assessing the impact of arts programming, experimental studies that utilize pretest-posttest assessment with a random assignment of participants into treatment and control groups typically provide the most rigorous and reliable results (Grembowski, 2016). However, qualitative data collected from surveys, interviews, focus groups, and artwork created by program participants can provide valuable insight into participants’ subjective experiences (Ezell & Levy, 2003) and position program participants as co-creators of knowledge (Walsh, Rutherford & Crough, 2013). To minimize threats to the validity of the results, the instruments and procedures used to collect data should be standardized and should incorporate the best-practices established by previous studies (Farnum & Schaffer, 1998). Using a range of data collection methods, such as focus group interviews, observation forms, or checklists, can also enhance data analysis (Clawson & Coolbaugh, 2001).

Questions that remain unanswered or unclassifiable on AIYN surveys represent a missed opportunity for data analysis and can distort basic quantitative assessment. For example, classifying a missing response (“N/A”) as a “No” for a Yes/No question will produce misleading results by giving greater weight to the “No” value. Question 3 on the first AIYN Debrief Survey (2015-16), “Did the art program meet your expectations? Did anything surprise you?” provides an opportunity to quantitatively evaluate the overall success and impact of AIYN programming by comparing the percentage of “Yes” and “No” responses. However, 18% of responses were considered vague and made it difficult to undertake such an analysis. Ensuring consistent data collection across all 11 AIYN sites clearly presents a challenge, particularly when data collection is conducted by teaching artists, probation officers, or others with competing priorities.

Finally, relying exclusively on data that are legible and available may produce results that are not generalizable to the entire AIYN youth participant population. To improve reliability and validity of results, it is important to ensure an adequate sample of surveyed participants. Ideally, sample sizes will approximate, or be equal to, the total population of interest.

### **Recommendations**

To improve the quality of evaluation results, data must be collected in a consistent and standardized manner. Survey questions should reflect specific,



measurable objectives and should ask about only one thing (Farnum & Schaffer, 1998). For example, Question 3 in the 2018 Debrief Survey, “Tell us about a fun or challenging moment,” should appear as two separate questions, provided AIYN stakeholders are interested in what participants consider to be “fun” and/or “challenging.”

Developing effective evaluation practices requires continual discussion among AIYN staff, teaching artists, and researchers to calibrate organizational objectives and assessment instruments. While questions from the 2018 Debrief Survey appear to be structured in a way that will solicit open-ended responses (i.e., “Tell us about the group” and “Tell us about any other thoughts you had”), responses tended to be shorter and less substantive than those from the 2015-16 Debrief Survey. This unexpected and perhaps counter-intuitive finding can only emerge through a trial-and-error process and continual review of survey instruments.

Three additional resources that can inform AIYN program evaluation methods include: the YouthARTS Toolkit, the Harvard Co-Arts Assessment Plan, and a RAND Institute study of youth arts interventions in the Los Angeles area. These sources offer best-practices for data collection and further recommendations for conducting rigorous program evaluation.

<b>Arts Evaluation Resources</b>	
<p><b><u>YouthARTS Toolkit</u></b></p>	<p><u>Characteristics of Successful Programs:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Programs recognize that art is a vehicle that can be used to engage youth in activities that will increase their self-esteem.</li> <li>2. Program delivery is a collaborative effort among the artist, social service provider, teacher, agency staff, youth, and family</li> <li>3. The community in which youth live is recognized and involved</li> <li>4. Programs that involve the youths’ families provide the opportunity for greatest impact</li> <li>5. Successful programs provide a safe haven for youth</li> <li>6. An age-appropriate curriculum is used</li> <li>7. Dynamic teaching methods, including hands-on learning, apprentice relationships, and technology, are used</li> <li>8. Successful programs culminate in a public performance or exhibition in an effort to build participants’ self-esteem through public recognition</li> <li>9. Program planning is comprehensive</li> <li>10. Program evaluation is built into program design and implementation</li> </ol>
<p><b>Co-Arts Assessment Plan</b></p> <p>From 1991-1996, Harvard Project Zero researchers collected data from hundreds of</p>	<p><u>Evidence of Educational Effectiveness</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Power of art to transform and/or articulate personal identities</li> <li>2. Cultivation of strong relationships among center constituents (teachers, students, parents, staff)</li> <li>3. Knowledge of an attention to the interests and needs</li> </ol>

<p>community arts centers across America. Their 2-part study identified 5 indicators of educational effectiveness and 2 characteristics of effective arts instructors.</p>	<p>of the communities served</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Provision of enduring oases (safe havens) for students and families</li> <li>5. Attention to own process of development and transformation</li> </ol> <p><u>Characteristics of Effective Artistic Instructors</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Careful attention to process through ongoing reflection</li> <li>2. Interest in learning from their mistakes (that is, identifying areas for improvement)</li> </ol>
<p><b><u>RAND Study</u></b></p> <p>A study of 35 arts programs for at-risk youth in the Los Angeles area evaluated specific program features that were correlated with positive program impact.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Stone, A. Bikson, T., Moini, J. &amp; McArthur, D. (1998) <i>The arts and prosocial impact study: Program characteristics and prosocial effects</i>. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation.</p>	<p><u>Characteristics of Effective Programs</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continuation: "The arts interventions receiving the highest rating for prosocial impact were more likely to allow participants to repeat classes and were more likely to offer ongoing sessions that continued indefinitely"</li> <li>2. Complementary program components (counseling, sports, tutoring, computer labs)</li> <li>3. Ties with community organizations</li> <li>4. Youth mentorship opportunities</li> <li>5. Emphasis on performance and presentation</li> </ol>

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### APPENDIX A: Survey Data

Survey	Questions	Number of responses
<b>Debrief Survey (2015-16)</b>	1. What have you learned about yourself, the teaching artist or from the art form you did? -----	72
	2. Has this art program helped you in other areas of your life? If yes, can you explain how? -----	72
	3. Did the art program meet your expectations? Did anything surprise you? -----	72
	4. Where do you see yourself 5 years from now? -----	64
<b>Debrief Survey (2018)</b>	1. Tell us about your teaching artist -----	38
	2. Tell us about the art form -----	37
	3. Tell us about the group -----	39
	4. Tell us about a fun or challenging moment -----	37
	5. Tell me about any other thoughts you had about the class -----	38
<b>Probation Survey (2018)</b>	1. Is this your first time	14 (all questions)

	<p>supervising an arts program?</p> <p>2. Have you personally engaged in any previous art form?</p> <p>3. Did you participate in any of the art activities with the youth?</p> <p>4a. Have you noticed any changes in the youth participating in the program as a result of their involvement in the program?</p> <p>4b. If yes, can you describe the changes you have noticed?</p> <p>5. Do you think art programming is important for incarcerated youth?</p> <p>6. Do you think the Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network's art program was successful?</p> <p>7. What can be improved?</p> <p>8. Would you like for this art organization to continue offering programming at your facility?</p> <p>9. Would you be interested in participating in an arts workshop just for probation staff?</p> <p>10. Any additional comments?</p>	
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