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Rockman et al

Research & Evaluation

The Studio

Evaluation Report

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Program Overview: Making Media and Building Community with Young People	5
Evaluation Overview	8
Theory of Action: Creativity as Learned Practices for Personal & Social Change	9
Youth Media Symposium	12
Film Camp	16
Artists in the Classroom	20
Art Exhibitions	23
Recommendations	25
Appendix: Research Protocols	27
Endnotes	32



Executive Summary

The Studio aims to connect nonprofit, public, and private institutions, professional artists/creatives, and educators in diverse fields to create opportunities for young people in San Jose in creative arts and social change.

Rockman et al (REA), an independent research and evaluation organization, conducted the external evaluation for SV Creates' The Studio. Funded by the Adobe Foundation and building on learning and experiences gained from prior work on Adobe Youth Voices, The Studio engages underrepresented young people in hands-on learning to create, collaborate, and exhibit their original artworks.

Drawing on partnerships with local arts and youth development organizations, local school districts, the Santa Clara County Office of Education, and creative professionals, The Studio consists of several key components to promote youth engagement and participation across creative arts: 1) Youth Media Symposium, 2) Film Camp, 3) Artists in the Classroom, and 4) Art Exhibitions.

REA's evaluation aimed to inform leadership decisions and program practices in youth media and mentorship by exploring the implementation and impacts of The Studio on youth participants. Research methods included (a) event surveys to gather youth feedback; (b) in-depth interviews with youth, artists, and educators; (c) observations of program activities, and (d) content analysis of youth media. This report presents findings emerging from that evaluation.

The study found that The Studio utilizes a theory of action for creativity that draws on young people's real-life challenges to produce socially-conscious products for real audiences. Through mentored learning experiences with professional creatives, The Studio uses art and media production as tools to collaboratively examine and express youth voices and identities within a supportive learning environment.

Creative expression is viewed as a teachable set of skills that offer opportunities for young people to examine critical issues and decisions in their lives. Youth and mentors report that participants learn technical skills to create compelling art and media, as well as soft skills to manage time, meet deadlines, communicate more effectively, work together, and incorporate and give constructive criticism. The Studio expands young people's appreciation and capacity to create with purpose.

Overall, learning takes place in an informal educational context grounded in:

- Positive youth-adult relationships based on respect for and trust in young people's creative potential;

- 
- Creative processes that start with young people's interests, observations, and talents, which are developed through mentorship with media professionals from varying creative fields, and
 - Intentional connections drawn between young people life experiences/ backgrounds and creative industry practices.

Over the course of the project, program leaders showed interest and capacity to modify program strategies based on formative feedback gleaned from the external evaluation and their own ongoing reflection. For instance, observations and event surveys of participants at the 2016 youth media symposium suggested the program would benefit from more opportunities for hands-on learning and interaction between the professional creatives and youth. For the 2017 symposium, workshop presenters were asked to incorporate a hands-on activity, physical demo, or interactive exercise.

After a successful start up, SV Creates is currently exploring new models of inter-organizational collaboration. Approaching the end of one year focused on developing and piloting a cross-sector partnership with the city of San Jose's 'SJ Digital Arts,' SV Creates has set the stage to expand youth creative arts opportunities locally. While it remains to be seen which organization will lead each key program strategy, key decisions will be made during the summer 2017. There is a shared commitment to continue to broaden participation in art and media production among students from historically underrepresented groups. As SV Creates and SJ Digital Arts look to sustain successes and scale up the program, we offer some recommendations for continuous improvement.

Program Overview: Making Media and Building Community with Young People

The Studio was established to provide opportunities for socio-economically and culturally diverse youth in Silicon Valley to practice creative arts with their peers professional creatives and explore career paths in varying creative fields. The program aimed to connect young people to resources, networks, and hands-on learning in filmmaking, visual arts, music, and storytelling.

“It takes more than one program to create change in young people’s lives.”
-Co-founder of *The Studio*



Year 1: Starting Up

With a two-year grant from the *Adobe Foundation, SV Creates* (San Jose, CA) launched *The Studio* in the fall of 2015. The initiative essentially rebranded longer-term efforts of artists, educators, and organizers connected to SV Creates to provide creative opportunities for youth media making and storytelling. The group’s prior engagement in *Adobe Youth Voices* is broadly understood as a key element in shaping underlying thinking and design of *The Studio*.

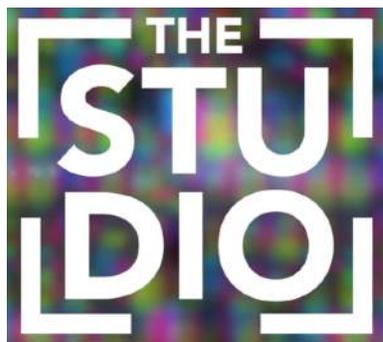
The overarching goal was to establish a web of cross-sector relationships to facilitate youth participation and

career exploration in diverse creative arts.

Recruiting teaching artists, media educators, and professional creatives to serve as media mentors, *The Studio* engages young people in creating original, socially-oriented art and media.

Aiming to build creative networks and close opportunity gaps for youth in art, media, and design.

Working jointly with other youth and media mentors, young people gain professional practices, tricks of the trade, and hands-on experience with specialized tools in multi-modal art



and media production. Youth also learn a range of critical soft skills necessary to effectively communicate and collaborate on art/media projects.

Key constituents of The Studio:

- **Young people** in and out of schools and programs offered by Santa Clara County Office of Education, and other educational institutions;
- **Professional creatives**, including artists, filmmakers, technology professionals, producers, and media educators, who teach or mentor;
- **Teachers** who host artists in their classrooms and sometimes participate in the arts themselves;
- **School, district, and community leaders** who help secure learning spaces in and out of schools and provide organizational supports to implement programming; and
- **Creative entrepreneurs and businesses** with deep economic and human capital to support and/or participate in program components .

Mid-way into the first year, leaders realized they would need to scale back in scope, in part from underestimating the amount and degree of work it took to plan and execute high impact art media events, while building school relationships and offering longer-term teaching. The founding director explained, they didn't have the bandwidth to effectively implement the 9 different projects initially planned. They pared down to provide high quality programming across **4 creative components**:

1. **Youth Symposium**: Annual one-day conference and field trip for high school students and school-day educators to interact and learn with art/media industry professionals.
2. **Film Camp**: Intensive 4-week after-school experience to engage in the writing, directing, and producing of a short video that responds to a creative challenge, addressing issues that matter to young people.
3. **Artists in the Classroom**: In partnership with Santa Clara County's Office of Education, *The Studio* brings professional artists

into high school classrooms and alternative education settings. Artists lead short-term workshops or 10-12 week project-based teaching residencies in photography, painting, screen printing, music production, and other media making.

4. **Public Art Exhibitions:** In collaboration with local cultural arts venues, youth have opportunities to showcase their art and media creations and celebrate learning with real audiences in public forums.

“Any time you start something up, there’s a learning curve... I think there’s so much potential in bringing artists into the classroom to work on projects and getting students out of the classroom.” -San Jose high school teacher

Year 2: Transitioning

After a successful start up year, The Studio faced a new challenge at the beginning of the second year. Its director could not continue to manage day to day operations. As SV Creates weighed its options, the organization was rethinking its own course and considering new models of collaboration.

SV Creates thus opened talks with the city of San Jose’s Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) to explore a new partnership with the SJ Digital Arts initiative (SJ Digi). After concluding that the goals of both organizations were closely aligned and that SJ Digi had the capacity to significantly expand the program, SV Creates began the process of sharing knowledge of practice, re-examining organizational roles and responsibilities, and collaboratively

coordinating youth programming. As one SV Creates leader said, “it’s an evolution, not an end. We are in the process of determining the plan forward, figuring out where the synergies are, and what strengths to capitalize on for each component. In the 2017-18 year, some of The Studio’s components may become embedded in SJ Digi’s programming. A PRNS leader remarked, “This is a huge opportunity to...expand access to digital arts for underserved youth and provide real pathways to the arts.”

In collaboration, SV Creates & SJ Digi staged the 2016 international youth film festival. In the spring 2017, they doubled the size of the youth media symposium, while maintaining high participant engagement and satisfaction. Any partnership brings challenges, though leaders appeared poised to build on early successes and address areas in need of improvement.



Source: "We Are Next" youth film

Evaluation Overview

Rockman et al (REA), an independent research and evaluation firm, conducted the external evaluation study for *The Studio*. The aims of this evaluation were:

- to inform the articulation of the program goals and emergent theory of action to foster the next generation of creatives and change makers, and
- to provide recommendations towards the program's goals.

Serving as an interested outside observer in studying the formation of *The Studio* and its potential impacts, REA sought to provide feedback on participants' experiences and learning processes, to explain the program approach, and to offer suggestions for improvement. Key evaluation questions included:

1. What, if any, impact does *The Studio* have on students' knowledge of professional pathways and civic engagement in creative fields?
2. What if any impact does the program have on students' attitudes or abilities to engage in creative pursuits?
3. What feedback and recommendations do stakeholders have to improve the program?

REA sought to inform the organization's approach to youth media mentorship. To examine this context, evaluation methods included:

- **Informational interviews** with key staff running *The Studio*;
- **Post-only event surveys** to gather participant perceptions and feedback;
- **In-depth interviews** with twelve (12) youth, six (6) artists/creatives, and (4) school-day educators; and
- **Observations** of out-of-school program activities and youth-created media.¹

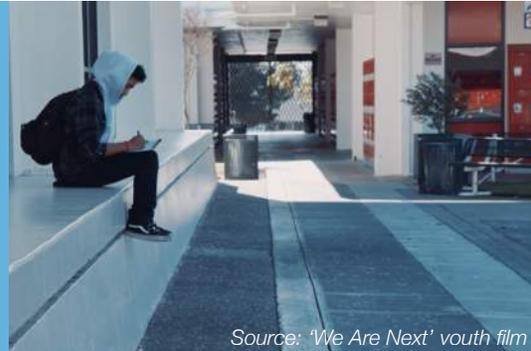
Organization of the Report

This report synthesizes implications across the evaluation study. First we articulate *The Studio's* theory of change in action. Next we highlight findings from the four main program activities. Finally, based on these observations we offer recommendations towards continuous program improvement.

Theory of Action: Creativity as Learned Practices for Personal & Social Change

“People often think that creativity is natural born. I don’t. Creativity is a skill that you can build.”

-Teaching Artist



Source: 'We Are Next' youth film

Creativity in a Complex World

We are living in a time of fast moving change and unprecedented challenges for young people. Economic, technological, and demographic shifts have expanded social and linguistic diversity across the country, while providing access to powerful new means for creative expression. The rapid pace of change means that many of today’s school-age youth will enter careers and use technology that have not been invented yet.²

The growing complexity of the professional, civic, and digital landscapes necessitates innovative approaches to education and youth development.³ Along with rigorous academics, the ability to think critically, communicate persuasively, resolve tough problems, and collaborate with others will remain key assets in the future.⁴ Creativity

traverses these interrelated abilities and is critical to an engaged life in an uncertain, changing world.

“When you’re in the middle of creating something, it’s amazing. You can surprise yourself with what you can do. But it doesn’t just come easily, I mean, you’ve got to be willing to do the work if you want to be really good.”

-Youth artist

Creativity is not just for artists and inventors. Creative thinking is crucial for all professional fields and personal endeavors, so as to adapt to continually shifting social realities. Community-based organizations, public institutions, small businesses, and corporations need people at every level who can develop valuable solutions to pressing problems of practice. Wide ranging organizations need people who can bring fresh ideas to the tasks at hand.

“I don’t feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it?” (Michel Foucault, 1988, p.9)



Creativity as a Source of Knowing Self and the World

Contrary to popular accounts of creativity that tend to assume certain people are endowed with innate creative abilities, *The Studio* operates on a premise that anyone has the capacity to create with purpose. While creative inspiration often manifests in bursts, “creativity is a skill that you can keep honing and polishing,” explained an artist and media mentor.

The trouble is that, as many youth advance through formal education,

“I know students who took a year to write a rhyme they were proud of. It’s that kind of commitment we make to you. We’re here to invest in you and your creativity.”
-The Studio coordinator

they are tacitly or overtly encouraged to conform to social educational norms through the memorization and regurgitation of facts.⁵ Conscious or not, this prevailing structure suppresses opportunities to exercise open-ended, creative thinking and generate novel ideas.

The Studio’s founders, teaching artists and media mentors express a strong sense of responsibility to invigorate learning in young people’s lives through creative arts, particularly youth with limited access to art and media production. This impetus to creatively engage youth reflects a similar sentiment expressed in Foucault’s quote above. The act of creating reshapes one’s understanding of self in the world.

Creativity as a Source of Positive Social Change

Many of the youth participating in *The Studio* encounter significant life struggles. “The students face huge hardships: addiction, poverty, crime,” which, as a teaching artist explained, “create inconsistencies in their lives.” Staff and artists described creative expression as a tool to intentionally draw on real-life challenges and give voice to young people’s identities. Youth life circumstances thus offer openings to analyze and rethink

“We all have the potential for creativity. It is equally true to say, though, that very many people have never developed these powers properly.

-Sir Ken Robinson

important issues in their lives. In this way, the act of creating may provide certain therapeutic benefits, as students learn strategies and get support to express themselves and cope through positive risk-taking. A teacher said:

“You can watch some them [students] start to change over the project... These tough kids start to let their guard down... Many of them have such huge issues they’re dealing with. I think art lets them express themselves without having to talk about it.”

The scope of social-emotional problems that the young people confront also levies strain on educators and requires an instructional approach that can “flow like water,” said a teaching artist. To effectively engage youth of varying backgrounds, experiences, and interests, *The Studio’s* teaching artists and mentors draw on student struggles or troubling behavior as learning opportunities.

The Studio stands apart from many students’ everyday learning experiences in school. A student explained:

“It takes 10,000 hours of sweat and labor to perfect your craft.”

-Music producer & Youth Symposium presenter



-Source: We Are Next

“I’ve never done anything like this. We learned all sorts of stuff about film production. We got to look behind the scenes work at everything that goes into [a video shoot]... But it didn’t feel like learning.”

Both teaching artists and classroom teachers recognize that most students eagerly look forward to *The Studio* because it offers designated time in their regular schedule to be creative. The program thus provides an ongoing space to explore creative arts and learn from artists who understand and appreciate youth cultures.

Furthermore, since participation in *The Studio* during the school day requires that students be present and meet basic school responsibilities, the inclusion of media arts has motivated some hard-to-reach students to want to attend and stay engaged in school.

In the remainder of this report, we examine the words and stories of youth artists, their teachers, and creative professionals to understand the learning and experiences that transpire through participation in *The Studio*.

"I kept wanting to smile because of the amazing opportunity to go on this field trip." -Youth participant



Youth Media Symposium

The Studio's flagship event is annual interactive conference and school-day field trip with high school students, school teachers, and art and industry professionals. The day features a keynote speaker, hands-on and discussion-based

workshops, networking opportunities, and a panel of professional from a range of creative fields. Overall, the symposium aims to:

- introduce youth to art and media industries,
- explore career pathways in creative professions,
- build relationships among aspiring and established creatives, and
- engage artists, educators, and creative businesses in a shared cause.



In January 2016, *The Studio* held its first annual youth symposium at the Mexican Heritage Plaza. Ten professionals representing diverse creative fields, five

school-day media teachers, and over 100 students participated. The second annual symposium in March 2017 grew to almost 200 students. While the basic format remained the same, this year also featured hands-on screen printing, live music productions, and a live commercial set by Mac House Productions, in which students could learn about each



"It's inspiring to meet artists and hear their stories...what struggles they've had... I took a lot from that... It was cool how down to earth they were." - Youth participant

person's role on set and observe or participate in the live video production.

Workshops leaders shared their experiences breaking into and working in their respective creative fields. In line with *The Studio's* philosophy of creating with purpose, presenters told their own stories of struggle and strife and how creative pursuits offered an outlet to channel their interests in career paths. Participants had the chance to glimpse at varying creative

**"When you see people who are successful, you tend hear just the glory...Today you're going to have the unique opportunity to hear professionals in creative industries talk about not just the glory, but their story. What was it like when they were your age? What were they trying to figure out? What were their failures and mistakes?"
-Teaching Artist**



*"The students really liked the presenters and the variety of different creative art fields that were shown. Everyone who went to the symposium came back very excited."
-High school teacher*

professional pathways and how art and media production connects to real-world, life-

long learning.

Learning through Stories

At the 2nd annual symposium, participants assembled in the auditorium for a short promotional video about youth media production by SJ Digi. A youth worker offered a declaration that could have served as a motto for the symposium:

"The misconception of the youth we serve is the area we're in. People think...not much can come out of it. But really, if you give kids an opportunity, give anybody an opportunity, they can strive."

A youth participant described the significance of this film as a counter-narrative to prevailing opinions about urban youth and creativity:

"I loved the movie they played in the morning... I think a lot of people underestimate what kids can do... When people see the stuff we make, a lot of people are like, 'Whoa! You did that?' They can't believe it... Part of me is like, why is it so hard to believe I made that?"

School-day teachers were impressed by the powerful messages delivered by young professional creatives with whom students could readily identify. Although the essential themes of hard work and of perseverance are similar to ones promoted in the school day, some teachers believed that their students were more open and receptive to hearing messages from artists they can relate to.

"I was really impressed with the stories and the overall message of the symposium. It's powerful to have these successful artists say to follow your dreams and then describe the level of work they put in... A lot of my students aren't going to pursue the arts, but they can all learn from that message."

"[The symposium] got a lot of students talking and thinking about what they want to do after high school."

One teacher maintained that the power of these stories lies in the artists' capacity to relate to urban youth of color.

"I think [the organizers] did a great job selecting the presenters. They're from similar backgrounds [as the students]... I think the kids related to their stories because they

connected with them...[The artists] they had instant credibility.”

Students and teachers expressed gratitude for the chance to gather and learn from professional artists, to hear about their creative journeys, and to meet new people engaged in the arts locally. The young people found the artists’ stories inspiring and relatable. Students said:

“It’s great to hear about how different people came up... I can relate to what [Mac House founder] said... He found his passion and he worked to make it happen.”

“I really liked learning what they [artists] went through, how they got where they are today.”

One teacher said, “the way the students were so engaged, I felt like they were able to learn a lot about what it takes to be a professional in different creative industries.”

Hands On, Minds On

Feedback across interviews and event surveys indicate that the vast majority of participants found the symposium an interesting and valuable experience. Over 95% of survey respondents in 2016 and 2017 agreed that the workshops were engaging and that they learned something new. In general, participants were most excited by those workshops that provided opportunities for direct hands-on learning and/or interactive discussion. They also consistently

request more of this type of dynamic, experiential learning workshop.

“The students really loved the hands on workshops... The live film set was amazing. They got to see how a commercial gets made...A lot of them jumped in and participated too.”
-High school teacher



For instance, Mac House Production’s workshop (depicted above) consisted of a live commercial video shoot. Students first toured the set to speak with the director, producer, art director, makeup artist, models, gaffer, camera crew, and editing team about their interconnected roles.

As the director explained to the youth, “Filmmaking is a team sport. I want you to get a sense of how each department works.” Afterwards, students observed or participated in producing the commercial, which aired at the end of the day in the auditorium. Students found this workshop particularly engaging.

"I liked seeing how the film set actually runs... I learned that each person has a different job but they all have to work together. "

"It was cool seeing the commercial get made... I mostly just watched but my friend helped operate the camera."

"The guy who did the lighting is called the gaffer. He talked about how when he was getting started, he didn't have money for expensive equipment so he'd buy Chinese lanterns for lighting... That gave me ideas about how I don't need to be high tech to make films."

A teacher said, "To be able to see a professional film site was exciting for [students]. Many of them were either working the camera, or being the director, or actually on film... That type of hands on, seeing how production actually goes, really excited them."

Learning about Creative Career Pathways & Practices

Participants enjoyed learning about the artists' career trajectories and experiences in their respective professions. Many youth were thrilled for the opportunity to ask the artists questions and have meaningful however brief exchanges. A student said, "It was cool to hear their stories and find how they got started... I got ideas about what I could do."

"Opportunities for artists in business are better than ever before."
-Artist/Presenter

"I had no idea there were so many career opportunities where you can apply the arts."
-Youth participant

Workshop presenters also found value in sharing their professional experiences with young people:

"It's exciting being able to talk to kids about achieving their goals and having a positive outlook on life. You can come from nothing and create something incredible if you have the drive and perseverance."

"I am happy to have the opportunity to give back and share some of my experience."

Overall, the symposium conveys clear messages that all young people deserve to learn and be challenged creatively, and that all youth possess the capacity to create. Participants get exposed to various fields and tend leave feeling inspired. Many of them want to engage in more in-depth media making opportunities, such as Film Camp, discussed next.





Source: 'We are Next' youth film

Film Camp

The Studio's signature Film Camp is an intensive creative mentorship program to study and produce a short film. In 2016, 45 high school students participated in the

month-long program. Placed in small groups, each film teams was paired with two media mentors (industry creatives and media educators). The teams received a design challenge to create a 1-minute video on the theme "We Are Next," a phrase intended to crystallize *The Studio's* vision of fostering youth creativity and leadership through the arts. A student explained:

"We wanted to make a film about San Jose, which is in the heart of Silicon Valley. But we wanted to show people it's more than that. It's not just tech. It's our home."

Enabling Constraints

The parameters for the film campaign provided clear expectations and

"This is what we do. We create. It's part of our lifestyle. That's what 'We Are Next' meant to us as well, that we are the next generation. I want to be able to share that with others and it will change people's opinions about us."
-Youth participant

I really enjoy working with kids and helping them to get those creative juices flowing. I know not all parents are supportive of things like that."

-Media mentor

structure, while allowing students a large degree of creative freedom.

"The first day, they showed us different videos to get ideas going... They talked about how a short video can make such a big story. You can put a lot into a very short piece."

"They told us we were going to create a 1-minute film that included the logo 'We Are Next.' That was also the theme. It was about how we have something to show and tell the world about who we are."

"They told us it had to be short and relate to the theme. But we could really make it anything that would tell our story and engage people."

Constructive Criticism

Youth said Film Camp was an intense positive learning experience. For many, it was deeply consuming, both in terms of time and engagement. "Sometimes I couldn't stop thinking about the film. I was constantly thinking about how we could visualize our goals," said one student artist.

At the same time, staff and mentors actively constructed a learning environment that supported students' openness to take creative risks and

"Getting more people involved in programs like [The Studio] and spreading the word about opportunities would change a lot of things in San Jose. It would change the way people see our art, the way people see us... When people see what we can do and how it connects to things around them, I believe it will change their perspectives." -Youth participant

learn through constructive criticism. One student said, "We were able to give each other criticism because it was a peaceful environment. It was an open environment and we were open to criticism and open to change."

Another student added, "I really admired the mentors when they were giving constructive criticism. And we all learned to give our own constructive criticism."

A media mentor stated, "Students gained a lot from giving and getting feedback on their films. It is such an important part of the creative process, to be able to take criticism and know how to use it to make improvements to your work... It's not something that most people need to practice... The students were a pleasure to work with. They were very receptive to being evaluated."

Collaboration Creation

The mixed groupings and team-based approach allowed for collaboration among peers that may not have interacted or worked closely. "Before this, we knew each other but we didn't really know each other."

The final products were "a work of all of us," taking "turns doing different parts and playing different roles."

The media mentors played critical roles to scaffold creative practices through collaboration. Students said:

"Our mentor knew we could do a better job [connecting the images

and the narrative] and told us, but then like didn't tell us what we had to do to make it better... We got suggestions but it was like, get together and figure this out."

"Our mentor was really good...It was hard sometimes because we'd send our work and when we got the feedback, if it wasn't good or if [our mentor] thought we could do better, that was tough to hear. But then she would give suggestions about where to make cuts and how we could improve it. So we had stuff to work with."

"Our mentor would always message us, giving us tips and advice."

Developing Skills

Working through the full cycle of film creation from ideation through post-production, our interviews with youth participants revealed that they got hands-on opportunities to practice and reflect on:

1. Technical skills, such as brainstorming, script writing, shot composition, directing, and editing:
 - "I learned about how to make a quality film, the techniques, what's necessary to make it all happen."
 - "We did a lot of shots that didn't make it into the film...You overshoot so that you have enough of the right footage."
2. Soft skills, such as, how to manage a schedule, working as a team, and

dealing with and learning from critical feedback:

"I think we all learned how to work well together."

"I learned how to manage schedule ...so critical to making a film."

"I learned skills that I can take to a new film. Like how I know what to do in the heat of the moment, how to make a deadline and complete a project that might be way behind schedule. I know now I can struggle through to create something quality on deadline."

Changing Perceptions

Film Camp changed students' perceptions of filmmaking. Students said they gained a deeper understanding of the multiple layers of work involved in producing films:

"They showed us all the ins and outs of making a film."

"Now I know that even crappy movies take so much work to make."

"At first I thought making films was just a bunch of guys sitting in office chairs, working on computers. Once we did the whole project, I realized how tiring it is to make films. And it's really rewarding."

Youth developed greater appreciation for both big picture thinking and detailed processes required to make a film. One young person said:

"[Film Camp] showed us that behind the perfect movie you see at the cinema, it took hours, it might take a day to shoot one scene. It gave us a whole new perspective on what goes into creating films. Now I think about the behind-the-camera work that goes on."

Film Camp advanced student interest in professional possibilities as art/ media creatives. The experience complemented exposure some have had through in-school media classes.

"[Film Camp] made me want to do this more."

"I'm planning to do something in media or art. Film Camp didn't change my plans. It helped me see this is something I want to do for a career."

Public Screening

Like all of *The Studio's* creations, students' final products were publicly screened, thus providing a real audience venue to display their work.

"Seeing our work on the big screen. That was really exciting to see our final video and know how much we put into making it."

"It felt so good when I saw our film up on the screen."

Students also got positive feedback from the audience.

"We got a lot of compliments by people who said it was professional quality and captivating."

However, attendance at the showcase was lower than students or staff had hoped. Several students remarked how disappointing it was “to look out and see so many empty seats.”

“It just really made my heart break.”

“Art is such a diverse and world-wide thing. Anybody can appreciate art. I was sad to see that so many seats were empty.”

At the same time, the low turnout was framed as a learning opportunity and a reason to persist. Students said:

“There's a small section of San Jose participating in the arts. We need more involvement and ways to publicize our work.”

“I remember one of the mentors saying how the empty seats was like a metaphor for problems facing the city...We need art to improve the community in San Jose.”

Catalyzing Creativity

Through collaborative filmmaking, these aspiring young artists received mentored learning experiences that tested their writing, directing, and producing skills and stretched their understandings of themselves in the world. “This project changed the way I look at San Jose... It’s not just for tech. We are part of it too. I think we showed that with our film.”

Cumulatively, the short films demonstrate the emergent creativity of teens, many of whom have been underestimated by or disengaged

from formal schooling. In interviews, youth described Film Camp as a unique experience that pushed their thinking, inspired them creatively, developed technical and soft skills, and advanced their existing interests in pursuing multi-media arts. By attending with care to young people’s social imaginations, The Studio helps empower students to explore and express their unique, interrelated voices and stories.

The quality of Film Camp’s interactions hinged on three key factors:

1. Organizers’ and mentors’ ability to relate to youth and craft experiences directly relevant to their lives. A student said, “The people who run [Film Camp] were really engaged. It’s like they knew us and cared. They are really tapped in to what our generation is doing and thinking.”
2. Meaningful coaching relationships with mentors that youth saw as more than media experts. “Our mentors were not just mentors... They were figures we could look up to. Get tips and tricks from. We could talk with them about problems we were having. They were more than just film mentors.”
3. An engaging design challenge that required collaboration to create compelling multi-media products for real audiences.



Source: 'Alt Ed art exhibition

Artists in the Classroom

Through a partnership with Santa Clara County's Office of Education, The Studio brought 12 professional artists into 7 alternative education sites. Teaching artists ran 10-week project-based curriculum that reached approximately 250 students in 2015-16 and 176 students in 2016-17. The driving objective of this program is to reinforce and strengthen teaching and learning that is happening in the classroom and to provide students' exposure to diverse creative practices and professional pathways. Artists led projects that spanned multiple genres, including photography, screen printing, digital storytelling, street arts, as well as hip hop leadership and music production.

Art as a Motivator for Learning

For many youth, art class is the highlight of the school week, a dedicated time in the schedule devoted to creative pursuits. "Sometimes The Studio is a student's only access to art and media production," a teaching artist said. The program opens possibilities for alternate forms of expression in school. A classroom teacher explained that engaging the arts helped some

students focus in school and gave a "reason to show up."

A teaching artist maintained that integrating arts and creative thinking in school supports students in learning "how to survive strict learning environments by 'checking out' creatively." In other words, by providing youth opportunities to express themselves artistically, The Studio may create avenues or foster strategies to function better in a formal education environment. There is a convergence of ideas that happens between the teaching artist and students when they are creating. The artists are rewarded by "seeing



Source: 'Alt Ed art exhibition

students get lost in the technical and creative aspects of art.”

Learning Teamwork and Communication Skills

In addition to art instruction, *The Studio* teaches young people how to more effectively collaborate and communicate through the creative process. One classroom teacher described a mural project that was used as a metaphor to engage students socially. He explained, “Making a mural is about teamwork.” The project promoted interactions between students who did not normally talk to one another because of conflicting scheduling or different affiliations. The program provided a real world project to apply collaborative learning.

The Studio also promotes positive risk-taking. For instance, during a spoken word project, teachers were surprised to see a student, “who was usually very shy to talk become open to speak and perform in front of the group.” Teaching artists intentionally design instruction that requires youth to practice communication skills such as active questioning, and expressing opinions.

Art as Healing

Like other components of *The Studio*, *Artists in the Classroom* engages students to explore their curiosities and life struggles through creativity.

Art serves as a vehicle to address emotions, pain or even trauma they have experienced. A teaching artist said, “The students are facing huge life challenges. Art offers a soft side...Therapeutic work is necessary to help them express themselves and cope.”

For example, hip hop music production directly draws on life experiences to create original music. Students read literature, analyze lyrics, discuss personal and social issues, and develop their own songs through a reiterative writing process. The songs often confront troubling

aspects of their lives or atone for past deeds. Students have penned apologies to their families. A recent track by a student in juvenile detention narrates his difficult past. In the final verse, he describes who he is now and who he wants to be when he gets released from jail. Using art to heal wounds caused by emotional or physical trauma can exercise a toll on teaching artists. One artist acknowledged that helping students

“I’m a beautiful mess...I’ve learned to accept all the flaws and failures. Because that’s part of what makes me who I am. I feel emotions, and I use music to express what I feel. It’s better to put it out in the world than walk around like you’re hard and pretend it doesn’t affect you.”
 -Keynote speaker, *Alt Ed Art Exhibition*

learn “tools to channel fear and anger... can be traumatic.” For this reason, it is essential that, as a group, teaching artists have opportunities to reflect on classroom challenges and brainstorm strategies.

Relationships Matter

Getting young people to open up and express emotions that they often avoid or cloak in displays of toughness requires the development of trusting relationships. The Studio’s teaching artists demonstrate the ability to quickly form close bonds with the students. This stems from genuine interest in what young people care about and aspire to, as well as knowledge and appreciation of youth cultures. A classroom teacher explained:

“Before SV Creates, the art staff we had were older, more traditional. The Studio artists are more on the students’ level. They can relate to the young people who are more engaged and drawn to the art.”

However, school staff have also expressed concerns that some artists do not maintain clear boundaries with students or have not prevented swearing and strong language during

art class. In addition, artists were occasionally late or failed to show up to teach. A teacher said, “schools are so tight on scheduling. If you’re not on time, it impacts the whole day.” These concerns raise the need for *The Studio* and school staff to communicate openly and regularly. On the other side, artists reported that some teachers were not as engaged in the program as they had hoped. An artist said:

“When an artist has been cleared to be in the school, teachers don’t have to be there or engaged. Everyone’s overworked so some teachers check out. This impacts youth participation.”

Although each party recognizes the other “wants to see the kids succeed,” sometimes it may seem like they “speak different language,” according to a classroom teacher. The school-day staff and teaching artists operate within different organizational cultures and professional expectations. Artists, teachers and school leaders may not arrive at shared understanding norms, roles, and responsibilities without planned time to share information and manage expectations.

Art Exhibitions

Most of The Studio's programs include a live gathering to showcase youth creative products in front of real audiences. The incorporation of public exhibitions creates a authentic learning purpose that helps motivate young artists to complete their art projects. In addition to these exhibitions, every year the program partners with the San Jose International Short Film Festival and Kaiser Permanente to stage a youth film festival.



In October 2016, SV Creates and SJ Digi hosted the third annual screening and celebration of short films produced by local youth. Eighty-nine (89) young people participated in

the this year's film festival that featured the theme, Make Art Not War. The youth film festival represents a movement to infuse the creative art scene in San Jose with young talent and youth perspectives.

At the event, Bill Hargreaves, a co-founder of the larger San Jose International Short Film Festival, explained, "This is one of the highlights of the festival. It's extremely inspirational...to see youth gravitating towards filmmaking. It's a great way to get messages out."



Source: Make Art Not War film festival

The festival provides a platform for local youth to share their films with a wider audience and see their creations on the big screen at CineArts Santana Row. One of the young filmmakers described the experience as deeply motivating and rewarding.

"I know it kind of sounds corny to say, but it was like a dream come true... It felt so amazing to see my film up there on the screen... Before this, I never really thought that I would do something like this... It made me want to work even harder to try to be a better filmmaker."

One media teacher whose students submitted films used the festival as an opportunity to shape the class around a project that had a clear social purpose and audience. He explained:

"We used [the festival] as their learning film... for a lot of them it was their first film that they ever worked on. So, it was learning the cameras, learning to tell a story... It was sort of an introduction to storytelling... But it had a bigger purpose, so they had a larger goal for their film and it would be screened in a theater... The event was truly amazing, rewarding for the students that attended. One of the



highlights was having their film up on the screen and seeing their work included with the other schools.”

A participating student told the audience that making a film for the festival was exciting and challenging. “Filmmaking was one of the things I wanted to do. This really was my first project I’ve ever submitted. It was pretty hard because I didn’t know how people would respond.”

Showing one’s creative work in a public venue establishes a real audience that can help boost student engagement and motivation to learn. The high stakes can facilitate anxiety that pushes young artists to go the extra mile. One student said:

“Knowing that the films were gonna be shown at the movie theater with all sorts of people I never met... That definitely made me want to do a better job... It would be different than if we made a film for class.”

By screening the films at a special event that included professional creatives, community members, as well as youth and teachers from other local schools, youth participants felt driven to create polished films.

An educator who attended the film fest described feeling motivated and encouraged by the high quality of the work and the event itself.

“I was so impressed with the films that students made. You could see their faces light up when they saw their films... And they were excited to see other students’ films. I would say that they (students) definitely took inspiration from seeing the other films... They got new ideas and energy from going to the festival.”

Another teacher described how some of his students found creative inspiration in watching other student films. One film in particular made a strong impression that led a student to take a deep dive into storytelling.

“One student was really impressed by the film from [name omitted], which made him want to create a longer story narrative film for the school year... He was really impressed...and wanted to write his own narrative with various scenes. [The festival] really inspired him that if they could do it, he could do it.”

Bringing students together from different schools provided new ideas for one’s own creations. Seeing what was possible in other students’ films helped to build confidence in their own abilities. This in turn enhanced interest to learn and apply new practices. The public forum thus served as a departure point for creative inspiration.



Recommendations

Young people, educators, and industry partners viewed The Studio as an inspiring and responsive artist collective that filled a critical gap in San Jose youth opportunities for art and media production in conjunction with professional creatives. Young people gained diverse skills through their participation and experienced viable options for creative expression and exploring wide ranging creative fields. As SV Creates and SJ Digital Arts looks to continue to enhance internal capacity and to grow the program through partnerships, we offer some recommendations to sustain successes.

Symposium

- ◆ Continue to expand the diversity of professional creative fields represented.
- ◆ Maximize learning and reduce wait time by organizing a hands-on activity during the registration/breakfast and lunch periods.
- ◆ Communicate earlier and more often with school and industry partners about the planned agenda and goals. This would allow teachers to facilitate student learning before and after the event and encourage professional volunteers to participate.
- ◆ Provide guidelines and support for all workshop presenters to lead interactive discussion and/or hands-on learning activities.
- ◆ Provide opportunities during workshops for students to reflect on and discuss their ideas and questions. Give time for youth to write down questions for presenters.
- ◆ Structure more networking and small group interactions with professional creatives and among youth from different schools.

Film Camp

- ◆ Include opportunities at each stage of production for the young people to pitch their works-in-progress and receive constructive criticism from media mentors and other teams.
- ◆ Conduct earlier and wider publicity for the final exhibition to ensure high attendance.
- ◆ Showcase youth films on the program website.

Artist in the Classroom

- ◆ Begin conversations with school leaders at least six months in advance of anticipated programming to provide ample time for scheduling. In general, schools plan in the late winter or spring for fall classes.
- ◆ Organize planning meetings for teaching artists, classroom teachers, and school leaders to discuss goals, expectations, and group norms. These meetings could take place prior to, during, and at the end of a 10-12 week project.
- ◆ Consider developing a memorandum of agreement, negotiated annually, which clearly articulates key roles and responsibilities of partners.
- ◆ Continue to encourage classroom teachers to participate in supporting instruction and creating art.

Art Exhibitions

- ◆ Increase audience attendance through early and intensive marketing that utilizes the program's network as well as social media.
- ◆ Provide encouragement and guidance for youth artists to submit artwork to other local and national competitions and exhibitions.

Evaluation

- ◆ Conduct in-depth case studies of youth and professional creatives to examine collaborative art and design practices in school and out-of-school settings..
- ◆ Conduct long-term follow up with youth participants to explore learning outcomes and track potential impacts over time. While long-term research communication can be hampered when working with a potentially mobile population, the program can strategize with school and/or county leaders to assist with follow-up, develop a database of program alumni, or consult with the youth themselves to get feedback on the process.
- ◆ Consider incorporating quantitative evaluation components, such as a youth survey to assess skills and knowledge gained through program participation, in order to compliment qualitative methods that focus on capturing participants' voices and stories. It may also prove useful to track other existing student data, such as school attendance and behavior or disciplinary incidents, to gauge the potential influence of students' engagement in the arts on educational behaviors.

Appendix: Research Protocols

I. Event Feedback Survey: The Studio Symposium

Please take a moment to share your thoughts about The Studio's Symposium.

Q1. Select as many of the following that describe you?

- Student artist/creative
- Professional artist/creative
- Educator
- Community organizer/activist
- Other: _____

Q2. How would you describe the Symposium using the scale below?

Drag the bar along the scale to rate this event. [scale not shown]

Q3. Please answer agree or disagree for each statement about the Symposium.

- The topics were interesting.
- The topics were easy to understand.
- I learned something new.
- I know how I can get more involved in The Studio.

Tell us about your experience by finishing each sentence in the box provided.

Q4. What really excited me was...

Q5. I want to know more about...

Q6. I was confused by...

Q7. What suggestions do you have to improve the Symposium? Are there topics you would like included in future workshops?

II. Youth Interview & Focus Group Protocol

Purpose:

- To understand various participants' roles in The Studio program
- To assess what participants are learning and doing and how the program may be improved
- To understand young people's perceptions of creative fields and the role of arts/media in social change

Format: Semi-structured Interview – open-ended questions

Approximate completion time: 60 minutes

Background:

- 1) To get started, I'd like to ask you to introduce yourself. Please tell me your name, your year in school), how you got involved in Film Camp, and the name of the project you worked on.
- 2) Before getting involved in The Studio, did you know anything about or have any experience with art, media, or technology? [If had experience, describe/explain.]

Process of Creating and Collaborating:

- 3) Thinking about your film project, how would you explain the creative process to someone who has never heard of it? How did you develop it?

Idea generation. What inspired the project (how did it come to be)? How did you generate ideas?

Research. What if any sorts of research did you do in creating the project (i.e., identifying a theme / community need/ problem, or reviewing other art/media projects)?

Design. How did you go about designing and refining your ideas (e.g. making sketches, creating models, or playing around with ideas visually)

Development. What else goes into creating and developing a media/art project? Did you create a blueprint, rough draft, or outline for the piece?

Reflection. During or after completion of the project, did you engage in reflective thinking about the creative content, the meaning or significance of this work? If so, please describe.

- 4) Have you run into problems during the creative process? If so, how did you address those problems?

- 5) Can you talk about the experience of working as part of a team? What was that like?
- 6) What did you find most challenging or difficult about the collaboration process?
- 7) What did you find most rewarding about the collaboration process?

Impacts on Knowledge/Skills/Attitudes:

- 8) Looking back, what have you found the most surprising about your experiences in The Studio? Why?
- 9) What if anything did you learn at Film Camp?
- 10) Do you think the arts and/or media production play an important role in your own life? In your community? How so? Can you give an example?
- 11) Do you feel differently about creative fields or professional artists now versus before being involved in The Studio? How so? Have your attitudes about art or media changed?
- 12) Is art or media production something you might want to do more of? Why or why not?

Feedback on The Studio:

- 13) What have you liked most about the The Studio so far?
- 14) What have you liked least? (Probe: What have the challenges been? Were these addressed or resolved?)
- 15) Do you have suggestions for improvement? How could The Studio improve how it works with young people and artists in the community?

III. Artist/Educator Interview Protocol

Purpose: To gather feedback from professional artists and educators about The Studio program (highlights and suggestions for improvements); to describe student experiences with the creative process; to gather information about the impact of The Studio on students' attitudes, self-perception, and skills related to creative arts and/or media production; and to understand adults' experiences working as youth mentors.

Format: Interview – open-ended questions

Approximate completion time: 40-60 minutes

Background:

1) Please briefly describe your role and responsibilities as part The Studio program. How did you get involved in The Studio? [Probe: Before getting involved in The Studio, what experience did you have in art, media, or technology? Experience in teaching?

Program Feedback:

STRENGTHS:

- 2) What have been your major accomplishments in The Studio?
- Were there collaborations/partnerships, tools, or resources that were particularly helpful in accomplishing the project work?
 - Why was this so useful? Evidence of effectiveness?

CHALLENGES:

- 3) Can you identify some aspects of the program that haven't gone as well as you'd expected? Probes:
- What challenges have faced getting young people engaged and motivated, helping youth persist when projects become difficult, or other issues?
 - What had you hoped to accomplish?
 - What were the challenges or barriers in doing {X}? How did you address these challenges?
 - Looking back, what could you have done differently?

RECOMMENDATIONS/CHANGES:

- 4) What lessons have you learned from the program activities? Do you have any suggestions for how the program can be improved? What recommendations would you have for others who'd like to replicate your successes?
- 5) Probe: How could the program have a greater influence on students, in terms of gaining skills/knowledge, positive attitudes, and self-identifying more with creative fields?

Impacts on Students' Knowledge/Attitudes/Self-Perception as Creatives

- 6) What are some of the highlights from your experience with The Studio?

- 7) What do/did you hope/want students to take away from the activities that you've led/been involved with? (goals)
- 8) To what extent/How well have The Studio activities accomplished these (student-impact) goals? How do you know (i.e., what evidence do interview respondents cite)?
- 9) From The Studio's activities you have been involved with, describe your experiences with students and how you think the program had an impact on them. Specifically, for the students you've worked with:

What do you think student learned from being involved in the program and/or what skills did they gain? Can you share a story that captures student(s) journey in the creative process?

How do you think that students' involvement in The Studio has influenced their attitudes or confidence with art/media production?

How do you think that students' involvement in The Studio has influenced their career knowledge, preparation, and/or interest in creative fields? Share example(s)?



Endnotes

¹ Individual research participants' names have been removed from the public research record.

² U.S. Department of Labor (2000). *Futurework: Trends and Challenges for Work in the 21st Century*. Available at: <https://www.dol.gov/dol/aboutdol/history/herman/reports/futurework/report.htm>

³ Darling-Hammond, L. (2015). *A New Moment in Education*. Huffington Post. Available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/linda-darlinghammond/a-new-moment-in-education_b_8073130.html

⁴ Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2015) Framework for 21st century learning. Available at: <http://www.p21.org/our-work/p21-framework>

⁵ Kane, T. J. & Staiger, D. O. (2012). *Gathering feedback for teaching: Combining high-quality observations with student surveys and achievement gains*. Seattle, WA: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Nystrand (1997). *Opening dialogue: Understanding the dynamics of language and learning in the classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press; Cazden (2001);