



2019 Annual Report



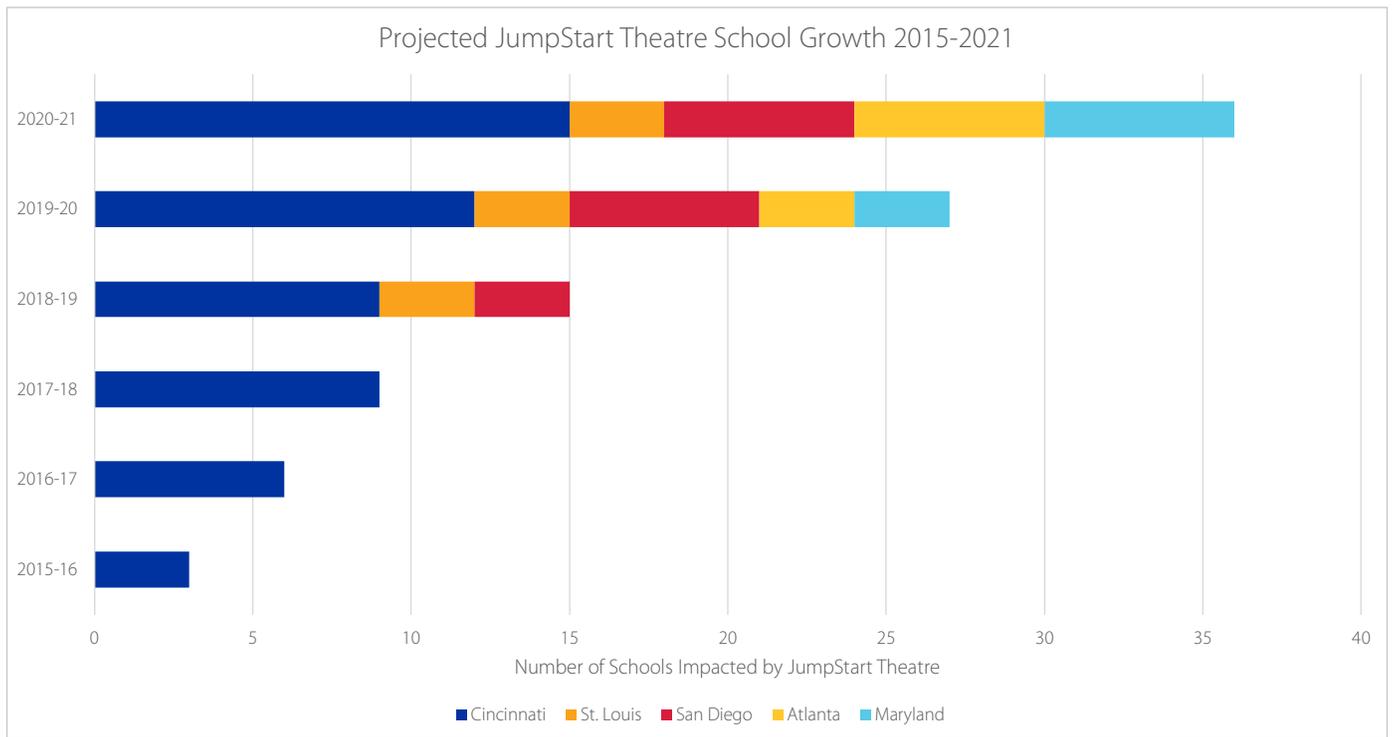


JumpStart Theatre students performing in the 2019 Cincinnati community showcase.

Introduction

Last school year was one of explosive growth and impact for the JumpStart Theatre program.

- A regional partner to continue and expand the Cincinnati program was selected, and three schools were added, for a total of 12.
- Three St. Louis schools will continue into their second year of the program.
- Three schools were added to the San Diego program, for a total of six.
- Two new regional partners were added (Frostburg, Md., and Atlanta, Ga.), and both have selected three schools each to begin production in 2019-20.
- The first class of JumpStart Theatre graduates continues to build momentum and sustain their programs.
- The Shubert Foundation continued its support in 2019, as did Music Theatre International and many individual donors. The program continues to benefit from an individual pledge of \$500,000 over five years. A grant from the H.B., E.W., and F.R. Luther Charitable Foundation (5/3 Bank and Narley L. Haley, co-trustees) continues to be the third-largest commitment to the program.



This second annual report reviews the program model and the status of the Cincinnati pilot program, then describes national expansion activity in 2018-19.

The JumpStart Theatre Model

Educational Theatre Foundation (ETF), in collaboration with iTheatrics and Music Theatre International (MTI), created JumpStart Theatre, a three-year scalable program designed to build sustainable musical theatre programs in schools that currently do not have access to theatre. The program also embeds a research project that measures its social and academic impact on students and their community. JumpStart Theatre aims to:

- be sustainable and easily implemented in underserved middle schools nationwide;
- engage as many students as possible in all aspects of theatre;
- build school and community interest in the arts; and
- encourage the transfer of theatre knowledge and skills to other subject areas in the curriculum.

JumpStart Theatre is a key component of ETF's access and equity strategies. JumpStart Theatre addresses the needs of underserved children in Title 1 schools who do not have access to theatre in their curriculum. Further, JumpStart Theatre provides innovative opportunities for parents and caregivers to participate in their children's school activities, a proven step in increasing student academic performance. Finally, JumpStart Theatre provides a sustainable model for schools that are chronically underfunded.

How does the JumpStart Theatre program work?

The JumpStart Theatre program provides middle schools with the training and materials necessary to present a musical theatre production in their schools. Participating schools, selected after a rigorous application process, make a three-year commitment to the program. Each school receives services and materials valued at approximately \$12,000 annually in the form of training, mentoring, and support to produce a full-scale show for their community. JumpStart Theatre also provides teacher stipends and modest budgets for sets and costumes. Students are involved in every aspect of the production: performance, costumes, sets, technical support, and design.

Teams of three teachers from each school participate in professional development “boot camps” led by a master teacher certified by iTheatrics, who developed the boot camp methodology and curriculum. These workshops provide training in all areas of musical theatre production, with the goal of empowering the teacher teams to guide the programs independently. A program mentor visits the schools regularly to observe the rehearsal process and coach the teachers in planning and direction. The teacher teams mount at least two public performances for their school and community and come together with other teams and their students in a culminating community celebration showcase of everyone’s achievement, held at a high-profile theatre venue. Each production draws from MTI’s Broadway Junior series and includes a ShowKit, donated by MTI, which supplies teachers with the resources they need to direct, choreograph, and teach the show’s music.

Why is the program working successfully?

Based on experience gained during the Cincinnati pilot program and initial learnings from national expansion locations, there are several factors important to “why” the program works.

1. During the application process, the staff evaluates several factors to determine if a school is a good candidate. Ease of communication and scheduling a site visit, administration and teacher attendance and enthusiasm, indications of student interest, and preparation (understanding of the program, thoughtful questions) are all early clues that a school will be successful.
2. Requiring the schools to commit to three years of programming ensures that each year builds momentum and involvement, increasing the likelihood of success and sustainability.
3. Three non-theatre teachers also must commit to serving on the JumpStart Theatre team at each school to protect against turnover and encourage delegation. Flexibility is offered so that schools may hold rehearsals during the day or after school, depending on their existing structure.
4. The boot camps and MTI ShowKit make musical theatre accessible. An emphasis is placed on “telling the story” rather than fancy costumes, complicated sets, or expensive lighting and sound. Teachers are encouraged to work within their modest budgets to identify the items most essential to communicate the story to the audience.
5. Additionally, a teaching artist mentor regularly attends rehearsals to observe and provide feedback. Unlike other programs, the mentor does not actively participate in the production but provides support for the teacher team as needed and helps them overcome obstacles.
6. Schools must perform their show at least twice, once for their school and once for the public. This builds the students’ sense of accomplishment and pride and increases parent/student involvement.
7. Over time, the schools build their financial sustainability through ticket sales at the public performance.
8. Finally, the end-of-year showcase is a significant milestone, celebrating the students’ accomplishment in a high-profile theatre venue. It introduces students to the world of professional theatre, boosts community involvement, and builds excitement for each school to witness the success of the others.



From left to right: Dater High School student in The Lion King JR. ; Aiken New Tech High School students in Hairspray JR.

The JumpStart Theatre Pilot Program Schools

For the inaugural 2015-16 year, three Cincinnati-area schools were selected as Class I: Holmes Middle School in Covington, Ky., and Finneytown Middle School and James N. Gamble Montessori in Cincinnati. Class II schools added for the 2016-17 school year included Aiken New Tech High School and Gilbert A. Dater High School in Cincinnati and Felicity-Franklin Middle School in Felicity, Ohio. All schools are inner-city schools, except Felicity-Franklin, which is a rural school.



From left to right: 2016-17 Finneytown Middle School student working sound board, 2016-17 Dater High School students in Schoolhouse Rock Live! JR., 2016-17 Felicity-Franklin Middle School student in Honk! JR.

For the 2017-18 program year, three additional Cincinnati-area inner-city schools were added: Clark Montessori High School, Oyler School, and Roberts Academy. The addition of Clark Montessori, the nation's first Montessori high school, means that both of Cincinnati's Montessori schools are participating in JumpStart Theatre. Oyler School is part of a growing national movement aimed at revitalizing schools by combining academic, health, and social services under one roof. Roberts Academy has a large population of students who are English language learners and aims to use theatre to help teach students English.



From left to right: 2017-18 Roberts Academy students in Schoolhouse Rock Live! JR., 2017-18 Clark Montessori High School students in Schoolhouse Rock Live! JR.

The Cincinnati pilot program will conclude when each school completes the three-year program (2020 for Class III schools). The goal is for each of the nine schools is to have a sustainable musical theatre program in place. ETF is working with each school to develop sustainability plans that incorporate ticket sales, local fundraising, and special events. Several schools have established or plan to establish a theatre class during the school day.

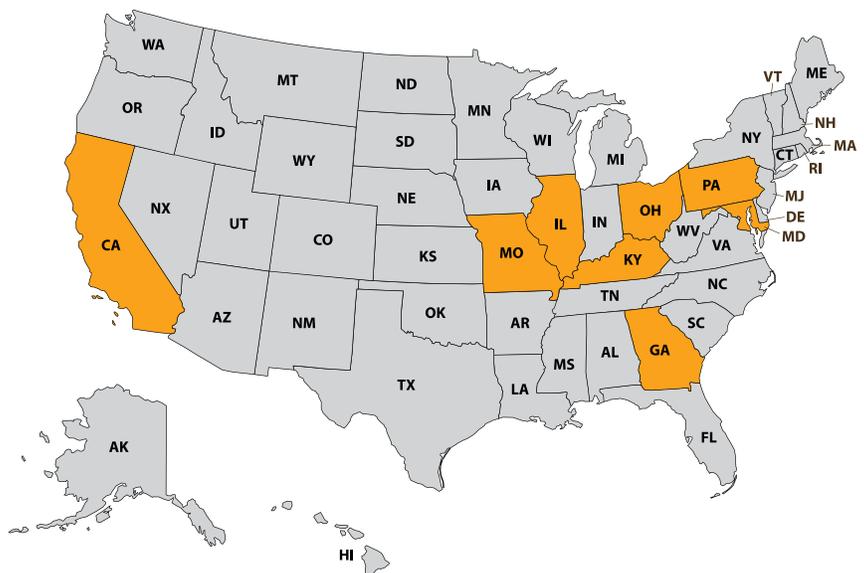


From left to right: 2017-18 Oyler School students in Annie JR., 2017-18 Holmes Middle School students in The Little Mermaid JR., 2017-18 James N. Gamble Montessori student in Into the Woods JR., 2018-19 Aiken New Tech High School student in Hairspray JR.

National Expansion to Impact More Underserved Students

To benefit underserved children nationally, ETF reached out to producing theatres with strong education departments. Partnership agreements were reached with La Jolla Playhouse (San Diego, Calif.) and STAGES St. Louis (St. Louis, Mo.) in late 2017. Mountain City Center for the Arts (Frostburg, Md.) and Alliance Theatre (Atlanta, Ga.) were added in mid-2018. Additionally, The Children's Theatre of Cincinnati was tapped to continue and expand the Cincinnati pilot.

These theatres have professional theatre educators on staff, a roster of teaching artists who can help train the teacher teams, and access to professional theatre performance spaces for the teacher-training boot camps and the year-end community showcase celebration.



Top row : JumpStart Theatre students from San Diego, Cali. performing in their year-end community showcase. Bottom row: JumpStart Theatre students from St. Louis, Mo. at their year-end community showcase.

Both the La Jolla Playhouse and STAGES programs have successfully guided their first cohorts of three schools through producing their first musical. Alliance and Mountain City Center for the Arts (MCCA) have selected their first cohorts. STAGES and MCCA are able to cross state lines, and STAGES has included an Illinois school, while MCCA has selected a Pennsylvania school. The Children's Theatre of Cincinnati selected an additional three schools for their region.

In spring 2019 all new schools attended orientations with the teacher teams and hired teaching artist mentors. MTI ShowKits arrived over the summer, and the teacher training boot camps and student auditions will begin in fall 2019 to prepare for the spring 2020 musicals. The schools active in the JumpStart Theatre program for the 2019-20 school year are:

| School | Musical | Region |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------|
| Clark Montessori High School | <i>Hairspray JR</i> | Cincinnati |
| Oyler School | <i>The Lion King JR</i> | Cincinnati |
| Roberts Academy | <i>The Lion King JR</i> | Cincinnati |
| Hartwell Elementary School | <i>Fame JR</i> | Cincinnati |
| Liberty Bible Academy | <i>Annie JR</i> | Cincinnati |
| Summit Academy | <i>Once on This Island JR</i> | Cincinnati |
| De Portola Middle School | <i>TBD</i> | San Diego |
| Taft Middle School | <i>Aladdin JR.</i> | San Diego |
| Knox Middle School | <i>Aladdin JR.</i> | San Diego |
| <i>TBA Fall 2019</i> | <i>TBD</i> | San Diego |
| <i>TBA Fall 2019</i> | <i>TBD</i> | San Diego |
| <i>TBA Fall 2019</i> | <i>TBD</i> | San Diego |
| Margaret Buerkle Middle School | <i>TBD</i> | St. Louis |
| Cross Keys Middle School | <i>TBD</i> | St. Louis |
| Coolidge Junior High School | <i>TBD</i> | St. Louis |
| Northern Middle School | <i>Fame JR</i> | Frostburg, MD |
| Southern Middle School | <i>Seussical JR</i> | Frostburg, MD |
| Turkeyfoot Valley Area School District | <i>Annie JR</i> | Frostburg, MD |
| Pointe South Middle School | <i>Schoolhouse Rock Live! JR</i> | Atlanta |
| Young Middle School | <i>Once on This Island JR</i> | Atlanta |
| Garrett Middle School | <i>Fame JR</i> | Atlanta |

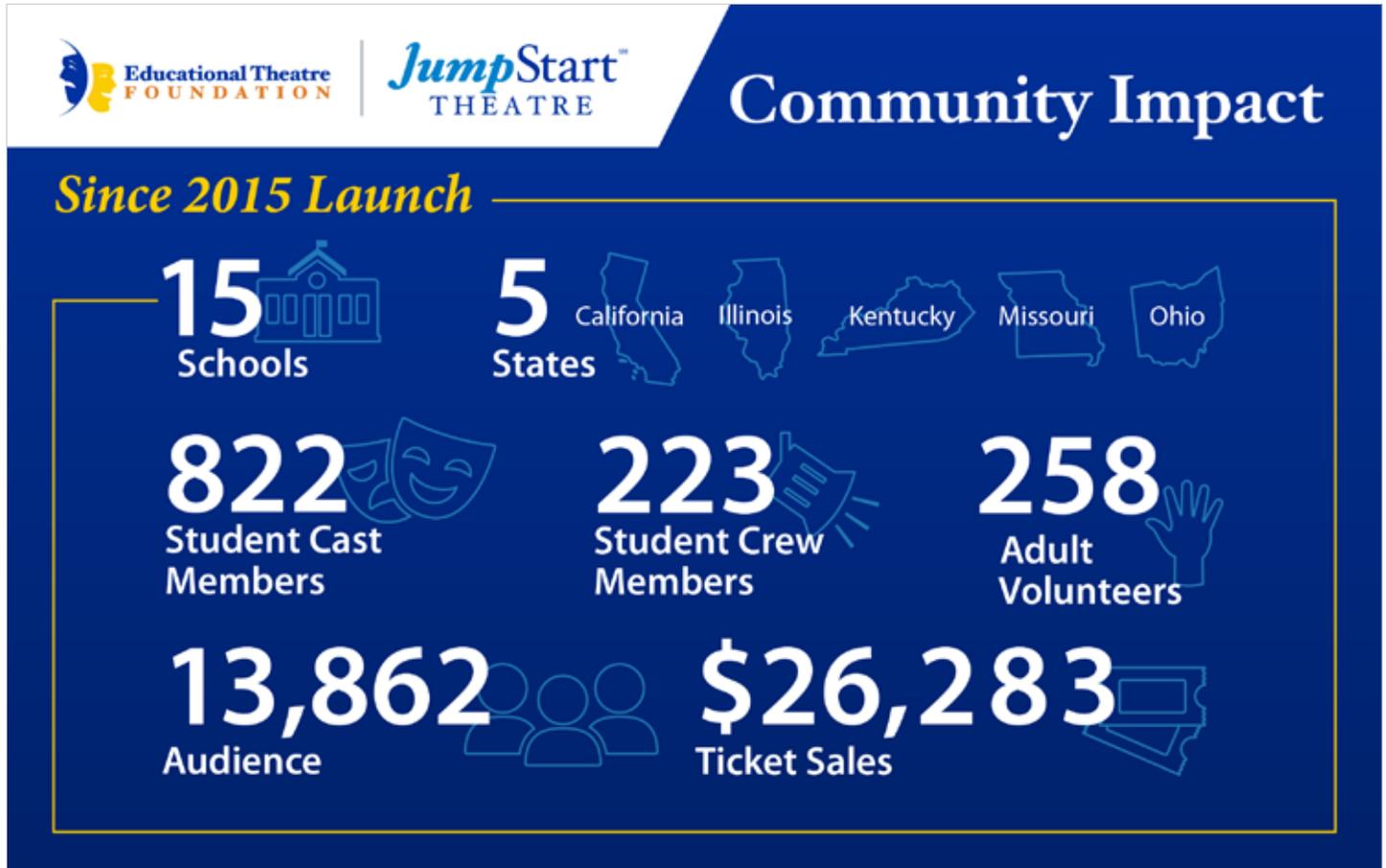
Performances in 2018 -19

Each school performed at least twice, once for the student body and once for parents and the community. Following are the schools, musicals, and audience size.

| School | Region | Musical | Audience |
|---------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Aiken New Tech High School | Cincinnati, OH | <i>Hairspray JR.</i> | 900 |
| Clark Montessori High School | Cincinnati, OH | <i>Annie JR.</i> | 600 |
| Dater High School | Cincinnati, OH | <i>The Lion King JR.</i> | 168 |
| Felicity-Franklin Middle School | Cincinnati, OH | <i>The Little Mermaid JR.</i> | 700 |
| Finneytown Middle School | Cincinnati, OH | <i>The Little Mermaid JR.</i> | 1000 |
| Gamble Montessori High School | Cincinnati, OH | <i>James and the Giant Peach JR.</i> | 200 |
| Holmes Middle School | Cincinnati, OH | <i>Willy Wonka JR.</i> | 200 |
| Oyler School | Cincinnati, OH | <i>Aladdin JR.</i> | 200 |
| Roberts Academy | Cincinnati, OH | <i>Aladdin JR.</i> | 400 |
| De Portola Middle School | San Diego, CA | <i>Fame JR.</i> | 660 |
| Knox Middle School | San Diego, CA | <i>Annie JR.</i> | 40 |
| Taft Middle School | San Diego, CA | <i>Once on This Island JR.</i> | 700 |
| Coolidge Junior High School | St. Louis, MO | <i>Schoolhouse Rock JR.</i> | 600 |
| Cross Keys Middle School | St. Louis, MO | <i>Once on this Island JR.</i> | 275 |
| Margaret Buerkle Middle School | St. Louis, MO | <i>Fame JR.</i> | 190 |

Three JumpStart Theatre showcases were held (Cincinnati, St. Louis, San Diego) in April and May 2019, reaching an additional 1,000 audience members.

When the 6,833 audience members at schools are added to the 1,000 attending the showcases, the audience for JumpStart Theatre in 2019 totaled over 7,800. In many cases, it was the first time that any parents had attended a live theatrical performance or seen their children perform. The schools are surveyed at the end of each year to gather feedback about the number of individuals directly impacted by the program and to determine the success of their ticket sales.



Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities

JumpStart Theatre teachers are encouraged to delegate responsibilities whenever possible. Building a “theatre family” is an important way to engage parents and community members. More than 250 volunteers helped these schools put on musicals during the 2018-19 school year. Here are a few of the jobs they embraced:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Vocal Coach | Sound/Light Operator |
| Cast Party Planner | Rehearsal Snack Coordinator |
| Program Creator/Distributor | Ticket Sales/Will Call |
| Concessions Operator | Make-Up/Hair Supervisor |
| Set Builder/Painter | Backstage Chaperone |

Congratulations, Cincinnati Graduates!



Top row from left to right: Gamble Montessori High School students in Into the Woods JR, Holmes Middle School students in The Little Mermaid JR. Middle row from left to right: Finneytown Middle School students in Seussical JR., Aiken New Tech High School students in Hairspray JR.. Bottom row from left to right: Dater High School students in The Lion King JR., Felicity-Franklin Middle School students in The Little Mermaid JR.

The first cohort of schools in Cincinnati (Gamble Montessori High School, Holmes Middle School, and Finneytown Middle School) completed three years in the program in May 2018, and all three successfully produced a musical on their own in March 2019. The second cohort of schools (Aiken New Tech High School, Dater High School, Felicity-Franklin Middle School) completed the program in May 2019. These six schools are now considered JumpStart Theatre “graduates,” and ETF will maintain contact to continue to report on their sustainability. MTI will continue to provide ShowKits free of charge for two years following graduation and at a significantly discounted rate for the following two years. All graduates have selected their 2019-20 shows and are excited to continue their success.

| School | Musical | City |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Gamble Montessori High School | <i>Beauty and the Beast JR.</i> | Cincinnati, OH |
| Holmes Middle School | <i>101 Dalmatians KIDS</i> | Covington, KY |
| Dater High School | <i>The Little Mermaid JR</i> | Cincinnati, OH |
| Aiken New Tech High School | <i>Singing in the Rain JR.</i> | Cincinnati, OH |
| Finneytown Middle School | <i>Once on This Island JR.</i> | Cincinnati, OH |
| Felicity-Franklin Middle School | <i>Aladdin JR.</i> | Felicity, OH |

The 2018 graduates have taken further steps to continue their momentum.

Finneytown Middle School and Holmes Middle School chartered Junior International Thespian Society troupes, recognizing and honoring a collective total of 24 students for high-quality work in theatre. Finneytown requested and received funding from the school board to cover stipends for four supplemental positions: JumpStart Theatre director, tech director, producer, and choreographer. Holmes partnered with nearby multidisciplinary arts venue The Carnegie to bring teaching artists into the school to help with their musical. Gamble Montessori applied a \$10,000 2018 NBC R.I.S.E. America grant toward expanding theatre into their high school, allowing the older JumpStart Theatre students to continue working in theatre. These students put on their first production of *Romeo and Juliet* in spring 2019.

IMPACT

JumpStart Theatre Research Project

The JumpStart Theatre Research Project, a three-year study carried out by the Centers for Research on Creativity (CROC), concluded in summer 2018, and the results were published in early 2019. The research was based on the Class 1 Cincinnati schools and a rural school (Felicity-Franklin).

A significant finding was that students who participated in JumpStart Theatre achieved higher Next Generation Creativity Scores than the control group, both before and after participating in the program. The researchers concluded that JumpStart Theatre draws at-risk students with an interest in creative expression and gives them an opportunity to develop and demonstrate creativity that might otherwise go undeveloped. [Read the full report.](#)

Impact on Individuals



Toby

Toby attends Clark Montessori High School and loves theatre but was always worried about being in front of an audience who wouldn't understand his speech impairment. He decided to audition for *Annie JR.* anyway and secured a speaking role. Students in the cast worked with him to help with his stutter during the show. During the performances, they watched from the wings, rooting for him. His director shared, "What I witnessed was pure love, what only theater can bring. The look on his face when he finished and took the bow was worth all the hard work. That is what theatre does for us: it gives a way to express ourselves even when we may be hiding behind other masks."



Tychod

Tychod was new to Oyler School in 2017, the first year of the JumpStart Theatre program there. He had major attendance issues and all his teachers were concerned. He was cast in *Annie JR.*, and one of his teachers stated that, after rehearsals started, he never missed a day of school, because he didn't want to miss practice. His teachers were so impressed with his progress that they selected him for a theatre camp scholarship held at CCM. His family moved, and he could have gone to another school, but he chose to stay at Oyler because of the theatre program. He was cast as the title role in *Aladdin JR.*, and his teacher reflected on

his progress: "He is flourishing, and all because of our theatre family. I knew that theatre could make a change in someone, but to witness it firsthand is breathtaking and honestly one of my strongest cherished memories in my teaching career."



Joseph

Joseph has never been a big fan of school, even though he knows it's important. He had some trouble feeling like he fit in and had spent time in a few different schools before landing at Roberts Academy. He signed up for his first play in elementary school and was fortunate to be able to locate a theatre program in each school he attended, which helped him find his footing. His first year at Roberts, he joined the cast of *Schoolhouse Rock Live! JR.*, then the following year, was cast as Genie in *Aladdin JR.* Joseph says that theatre "has benefitted me from almost every aspect. I've gained new friends, I fit in so much better, and I'm just genuinely happier." Theatre has also given Joseph a sense of pride and new career ambitions: "It is a terrifying experience the first time, because you always think in the back of your head that you are going to mess up a line, and when you don't, it feels great, you feel so accomplished, and that dopamine rush comes in so fast. It's so much fun. I will not stop until I get a career in acting because of what theatre class has given to me."



Diondre

Diondre was involved in the JumpStart Theatre program for all three years at Aiken New Tech High School in Cincinnati. He always had dreams of performing on stage but lacked confidence and opportunity. The first year Aiken introduced the program, Diondre secured an ensemble role in *Once on This Island JR.* and was surprised to discover how accepting and encouraging his castmates were. "My biggest fear was fear of rejection, and I never thought I could be talented enough to be doing things like this. I've grown. My first year may not have been my best year, but I really turned up." Diondre worked hard, supported by his new theatre family, and earned the role of Mr. Mayor in *Seussical JR.* during Aiken's second year, then Wilbur Turnblad and Mr. Pinky in *Hairspray JR.* By the end of his third production, Diondre's confidence had soared. He addressed a large audience at the 2019 showcase in Cincinnati and shared, "I've learned so much about stepping out of my comfort zone, expressing myself, and, most important, the value of trust in your fellow cast and crew members and respect for your director. Being a part of this production has changed how I felt about my school, because I never knew how supportive, talented, and special we were or that we were even capable of putting on a show so beautiful and excellent."

Responses from Cincinnati JumpStart Theatre Students and Teachers

An important aspect of the qualitative study of JumpStart Theatre's impact are the responses from the students and teachers. Several quotations illustrate the program's impact on individuals and their collaboration, creativity, empathy, and other important socio-emotional measures.

Students

“I like all the skills in life you can get from it. ‘Cause I have to do public speaking all the time and presentations. And just learning how things get put together is very helpful. And confidence is really key to what you do.”

- 8th grade student, Finneytown Middle School

“It’s been a good experience, a THRILLING experience. I’ve been having tons of fun and making so many friends!”

- 6th grade student, Holmes Middle School

“The people that join it, you know they’re determined. They want to do something. And usually most of ‘em are nice. And if not, they’ll evolve. And they’ll become friends, and you’ll have memories and make laughs.”

- 8th grade student, Felicity-Franklin Middle School



Teachers

“For my ELL students, if they can tell a story without words, they can feel involved without the added stress of lines in a language unfamiliar to them.”

- Teacher, Roberts Academy

“I learned to see my colleague’s strengths and recognize their weaknesses, so that I can best fill the gaps to get everything done that needed to be done by the deadlines. I learned to allow someone else to take the lead, which allowed me to address missing areas. I learned how to compromise, so that other teachers can learn and grow.”

- Teacher, Finneytown Middle School

“After these [boot camps], I always feel like I am part of the other schools and their shows because of all the talking and ideas we get from each other. I really enjoy learning from them.”

- Teacher, Gamble Montessori High School



“Our final performances were the most proud I have been in my 18 years of teaching. I really wasn’t sure if we would pull it together, and they did so much more than that!”

- Teacher, Aiken New Tech High School

“For the community, this show was the happening thing in town. I remember, last year, a lot of the members of the community were excited to see how the students had done, and this year was no different. The people of the community all joked about being at school on a Saturday and how excited the kids were to be there.”

- Teacher, Felicity-Franklin Middle School



From top to bottom: 2018-19 Felicity-Franklin Middle School students in *The Little Mermaid JR.*, Roberts Academy students in *Aladin JR.*, Aiken New Tech High School student, 2016-17 Felicity-Franklin Middle School students in *Honk! JR.*

“I teach a literacy enrichment course, so I get struggling readers and writers. When I have students in my class that are also in the musical theatre program, it enriches their academic pursuits in our class more than I can quantify. When we talk about plot, when we talk about tableaux, telling stories – beginning, middle, and end – I can use their theatre experiences, what they’re doing in rehearsal, in the curriculum in the classroom.”

- Teacher, Felicity-Franklin Middle School

“I learned that it is more exciting to students when you play the music and let them dance while you watch and then take their moves and use them in the choreography.”

- Teacher, Holmes Middle School

“My biggest takeaway from the three years and the thing that I’m most appreciative of is the knowledge that I’ve gained about myself. I have become a better teacher by using what I’ve learned through JumpStart Theatre”

- Teacher, Holmes Middle School

“The more you experience a production, the more you know that nothing will be perfect; roll with the punches, it will all come together, the show will go on – all those clichés, those are real. And the kids never disappoint.”

- Teacher, Gamble Montessori High School

“Through last year, we saw great changes in our students. As they moved through the year, they gained confidence, their academics improved, and they were learning songs, lines, and dances from *Schoolhouse Rock*. The students who were not native English speakers made gains in their English, which we saw evidenced not just on their test scores but also in their conversational skills, their social skills, and their confidence levels”

- Teacher, Roberts Academy



Top: Clark Montessori students in Annie JR.
Middle and bottom: JumpStart Theatre students performing in the 2019 Cincinnati community showcase,

Media Coverage

Due to the lifechanging nature of the program, JumpStart Theatre has attracted local and national attention. Below are just a few of the articles published about our efforts.

- [Mountain City Center for the Arts Founders Talk about the benefits of bringing Jump Start Theatre to a Rural Area](#)
- [Educational Theatre Foundation’s JumpStart Theatre to Partner with Children’s Theatre of Cincinnati](#)
- [Three Tri-State Area Middle Schools Awarded Fully Funded Three-Year JumpStart Theatre Program](#)

JumpStart Theatre National Expansion Fundraising

ETF continues to actively seek funding to broaden the JumpStart Theatre program to other communities and regions nationwide. To date, ETF has secured a \$500,000 individual pledge over five years, a \$100,000 gift from a family fund, and continuing annual support from MTI, The Shubert Foundation, and many individual donors.

Conclusion

The JumpStart Theatre program will make a powerful impact on thousands of students in the coming years, providing them with a more expansive education that teaches life skills, such as creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. Musical theatre is also great for building a positive culture within a school and with the parents and greater community. It's exciting to provide these opportunities to underserved students in California, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Georgia. Further, these educational programs help to create the performance and technical theatre talent for the future of the theatre arts.



Top row from left to right: Clark Montessori High School student in Annie JR., Roberts Academy students in Aladdin JR., Dater High School Student in The Lion King JR., Middle row from left to right: Aiken New Tech High School students in Hairspray JR., Oylar School students in Aladdin JR. Bottom row from left to right: JumpStart Theatre students performing in the 2019 Cincinnati community showcase, Clark Montessori High School students in Annie JR.

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