Introduction

2017-2018 has been a year of explosive growth and impact for the JumpStart Theatre program:

- Three schools were added to the Cincinnati program, for a total of nine;
- Two regional partners in the program’s national expansion, in St. Louis and San Diego, are in operation;
- Additional potential regional partners are being reviewed and qualified;
- A regional partner to continue and expand the Cincinnati program is being reviewed and qualified;
- Additional major financial support has been committed.

In this first annual report, we will review the program model and the status of the Cincinnati pilot program, and then outline national expansion activity in 2017-2018.

The JumpStart Theatre Model

Educational Theatre Association (EdTA), 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 our 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 care-givers 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 which 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 “bootcamps” led by a master teacher certified by iTheatrics, who developed the bootcamp 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. Each show comes with 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 during the Cincinnati pilot program, and initial learnings from our national expansion locations, there are several factors important to “why” the program works:

1. During the application process, the staff evaluates a number of factors to determine if a school is a good candidate. Ease of communication and scheduling a site visit, administration/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 their 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 bootcamps 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 that are 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 the 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.

The JumpStart Theatre Pilot Program Schools

For the inaugural 2015-2016 year, three Cincinnati-area schools were selected as Class I: Holmes Middle School in Covington, Kentucky, 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, with the exception of Felicity-Franklin, which is a rural school.

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.

![Roberts students performing Schoolhouse Rock Live! JR.](image)

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. EdTA is working with each school to develop sustainability plans incorporating: ticket sales, local fundraising, and special events. Several of the schools have established, or plan to establish, a theatre class during the school day.

## Cincinnati Performances in 2017-2018

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Musical</th>
<th>Audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aiken New Tech High School</td>
<td><em>Seussical</em> JR</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dater High School</td>
<td><em>Once on This Island</em> JR</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felicity-Franklin Middle School</td>
<td><em>The Music Man</em> JR</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finneytown Middle School</td>
<td><em>Seussical</em> JR</td>
<td>876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamble Montessori High School</td>
<td><em>Into the Woods</em> JR</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holmes Middle School</td>
<td><em>The Little Mermaid</em> JR</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberts Academy</td>
<td><em>Schoolhouse Rock Live</em> JR</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oyler School</td>
<td><em>Annie</em> JR</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark Montessori High School</td>
<td><em>Schoolhouse Rock Live</em> JR</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the May, 2018 Showcase featuring performances from all nine schools, 550 people attended.
When the 4,369 audience members at schools are added to the 550 at the Showcase, the audience for JumpStart Theatre in Cincinnati in 2018 totaled nearly 5,000. In almost all cases, it was the first time that any of the 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JumpStart Theatre Community Impact for the 2017-18 School Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students in the Cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Congratulations, Cincinnati Graduates!

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 are prepared to self-sustain their theatre programs. They are now considered JumpStart Theatre 'graduates' and EdTA will maintain contact in order to continue to report on their sustainability.

Music Theatre International (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 three schools are taking advantage of the offer and have selected their shows for the 2018-19 school year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Musical</th>
<th>City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gamble Montessori High School</td>
<td>James and the Giant Peach JR.</td>
<td>Cincinnati, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holmes Middle School</td>
<td>Willy Wonka JR.</td>
<td>Covington, KY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finneytown Middle School</td>
<td>The Little Mermaid JR.</td>
<td>Cincinnati, OH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The graduates have taken further steps to continue their momentum. Gamble Montessori applied for and received a $10,000 NBC R.I.S.E. America grant, allowing it to expand its theatre offerings into the high school grades, much to the delight of the middle school students who feared they wouldn't be able to continue musicals after completing 8th grade. A drama club was formed and students produced their own short play. Gamble is also planning to hire a part-time theatre teacher.

Finneytown received a New Troupe Charter Grant, enabling it to charter a new Junior Thespian Troupe to recognize and honor the achievements of its middle school theatre students. They plan to add a fall play in addition to the spring musical to expand their season and provide more opportunities for students.

Holmes has partnered with the Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services in order to integrate theatre and the arts into their standard curriculum, beginning with English, over the next several years.

Two princes sing during Gamble's Into the Woods

Horton ponders the tiny world of the Whos in Finneytown's production of Seussical JR.
In order to benefit underserved children nationally, EdTA reached out to producing theatres with strong education departments. Partnership agreements were reached with La Jolla Playhouse (San Diego, California) and with STAGES St. Louis (St. Louis, Missouri) in late 2017. 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 bootcamps and the year-end community showcase celebration.

Both the La Jolla Playhouse and STAGES programs have now selected their first cohort of three schools via an open application process. STAGES’ selected schools include one across the state border in Illinois. This spring, they held orientations with the teacher teams and hired teaching artist mentors. MTI ShowKits will arrive over the summer and the teacher training bootcamps and student auditions are scheduled to begin in fall 2018 to prepare for the spring 2019 musicals.

The schools active in the JumpStart Theatre program for the 2018-2019 school year are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Musical</th>
<th>City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aiken New Tech High School</td>
<td>Hairspray JR.</td>
<td>Cincinnati, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark Montessori High School</td>
<td>Annie JR.</td>
<td>Cincinnati, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dater High School</td>
<td>The Lion King JR.</td>
<td>Cincinnati, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oyler School</td>
<td>Aladdin JR.</td>
<td>Cincinnati, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberts Academy</td>
<td>Aladdin JR.</td>
<td>Cincinnati, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felicity-Franklin Middle School</td>
<td>The Little Mermaid JR.</td>
<td>Felicity, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross Keys Middle School</td>
<td>Once on This Island JR.</td>
<td>Florissant, MO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coolidge Junior High School</td>
<td>Schoolhouse Rock Live! JR.</td>
<td>Granite City, IL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Buerkle Middle School</td>
<td>Fame JR.</td>
<td>St. Louis, MO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Portola Middle School</td>
<td>Fame JR.</td>
<td>San Diego, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knox Middle School</td>
<td>Annie JR.</td>
<td>San Diego, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taft Middle School</td>
<td>Once on This Island JR.</td>
<td>San Diego, CA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third expansion location will be Atlanta, Georgia, with The Alliance Theatre as the regional partner. This new site and The Alliance Theatre partnership were publicly announced on June 5, 2018. The Atlanta application process will open in winter 2019 to select the first class of three schools for the 2019-2020 school year.

Preliminary conversations have also taken place with potential partners in Oakland, California, Frostburg, Maryland,
Washington D.C. and Durham, North Carolina. A new major donor has also expressed interest in a program in Detroit and a preliminary review of potential partners in the area is being conducted now.

**IMPACT**

**JumpStart Theatre Research Project**

The JumpStart Theatre Research Project, a three-year study carried out by the Centers for Research on Creativity (CROC), will conclude this summer with results expected in the fall. The research is based on the Class 1 Cincinnati inner-city schools, and also a rural school (Felicity-Franklin). Preliminarily, the first two years of research indicates:

- Students in the four JumpStart Theatre programs consistently outperformed non-participating students in all socio-emotional measures, before and after the program.
- The qualitative observation data indicated that:
  - Students demonstrated growth in their creativity, collaboration, self-confidence, ability to adapt, and sense of community.
  - Teachers demonstrated increased comfort with creativity and problem solving, sense of community, resilience, and theatre expertise.
  - 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.

In addition to the project above, a smaller research study will address the impact of musical theatre on English Language Learning (ELL) students at Roberts Academy in Cincinnati, where the student body originates from 12 different countries, 65 percent of whom are recent Guatemalan immigrants.

**Impact on Individuals**

**Ethan.** Ethan lives with autism and cerebral palsy and was involved in all three years of the JumpStart Theatre Program at Holmes Middle School. In 6th grade, he started off as “Sandy the Dog” in Annie JR., worked backstage on the crew for Schoolhouse Rock Live! JR., and concluded his 8th grade year as the “Chef” in The Little Mermaid JR. After the first year of auditions, the director shared this about Ethan: “We have a student in particular who I am very excited about. He has special needs, and limited mobility, but he really wants to sing, and he has an amazing singing voice. I never would have imagined it. And for him to get an opportunity to come out and sing in front of the whole school is a really big deal because he otherwise might not have that opportunity. He’s going to be amazing and I can’t wait for that. Wait till you see this kid. He came in and blew us away.” Ethan has expressed his appreciation for the theatre program on numerous occasions, crediting his experience with helping him make friends and become more involved in school. In an interview with a local news source, Ethan stated, “For kids like me out there, my message to you is, ‘Don’t let anything people say about you or your disability stop you,’ because frankly, in my eyes, everybody with a disability has a chance to make it big — and in reality, we all do.”

**Za’Khyra.** Za’Khyra at the start of the year was a quiet young lady who came to Gamble Montessori and didn’t have a lot of friends. She started meeting with the school psychologist because she had reported symptoms of depression. The psychologist learned that one of the things she did to calm herself down was sing to herself a favorite Disney song. She had a beautiful voice, was encouraged to audition for the musical, and landed the role of Erzulie, the goddess of love, in Once on This Island, JR. During the production, Za’Khyra and her mother became homeless and were living in their car, then a shelter. Her mother was eventually able to secure a job and made sure their new apartment was within walking distance to the school so Za’Khyra could continue attending rehearsals. Za’Khyra’s solo stopped the show, and she was so proud of herself for what she had accomplished. In an interview, Za’Khyra said, “It [theatre] helped because I didn’t know I could actually do this. It just changed my whole experience of being here.”
Zander. Zander is a student at Felicity-Franklin Middle school and has had behavior issues since kindergarten, spending plenty of time in the office for his short temper and declining grades. One of the JumpStart Theatre teachers at Felicity-Franklin thought being on stage would be a great outlet for him and encouraged him to audition for *Honk! JR*. He was cast in a lead role and the responsibility helped him realize his potential and leadership ability. This year, he played Harold Hill in *The Music Man JR*, and is the Class President with perfect attendance and an all-A honor student. He has embraced public speaking, sharing his love of theatre with the local branches of the American Legion, the Ladies Auxiliary, and a 550-person audience at this year’s JumpStart Theatre Showcase. He even nominated the teacher who encouraged him to audition for a local “Queen for a Day” award. After the judges read his essay about how she had turned his life around, they selected her as the winner. The pair and their families were treated to tickets to the touring production of *The King and I*, a well-deserved reward for the hard work they have both achieved.

**Responses from Cincinnati JumpStart Theatre Students**

An important aspect of the qualitative study of JumpStart Theatre’s impact are the responses from the students. Several quotations below show the program’s impact on individual students and their collaboration, creativity, empathy and other important socio-emotional measures:

“We all learned that if we commit to something, you have to stay with it or you’re letting everyone down, not just the actors but the audience.”

“You’ve got to support others. If someone misses a cue or stumbles on a line, you don’t yell at them. You’ve got to help them. You don’t want to push down a person, you want to build them back up.”

“I have ADHD, and OCD, and probably I’m bipolar, and chronic migraines, and sensory integration disorder, so I’m pretty much nervous about everything but, like when I’m onstage, or not even when I’m onstage, but just when I’m singing and acting, I don’t feel nervous at all.”

“I’ve liked it and I’m going to keep on doing plays.”

“I made a lot of new friends who I thought I wouldn’t be friends with, I became a lot closer with them.”

“I learned how to be more humble, I’ve learned that not everything is about me. I can still be part of things and make a big impact but not be the center of attention.”

**Media Coverage**

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

- JumpStart Theatre Poised to Introduce Musical Theatre Programs to Schools Across US
- Middle Schools will get theater programs with help of Stages St. Louis
- Educational Theatre Association will bring JumpStart Theatre Program to Atlanta with Alliance Theatre
- Coolidge is lone Metro East school selected for three-year theater grant
JumpStart Theatre National Expansion Fundraising

We continue to actively seek funding to broaden the JumpStart Theatre program to other communities and regions nationwide. We have secured $200,000 from two major individual gifts of $100,000 each, and additional gifts from Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS and Music Theatre International.

Conclusion

The JumpStart Theatre program will make a powerful impact on thousands of students over 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. We are very excited to be able to provide these opportunities currently to underserved students in California, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, and Ohio, and soon, in Georgia. Further, our educational programs help to create the performance and technical theatre talent for the future of the theatre arts.
Thanks to all of our partners and supporters on JumpStart Theatre!

Allstate
Eleanora C.U. Alms Trust, 5/3 Bank
ArtsWave
Barnes Dennig
Benefits Network Insurance
Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS
Cincinnati Arts Association
Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music
Community Arts Initiatives
Duke Energy
The Fine Schneider Charitable Fund
The Greater Cincinnati Foundation
Robert Greenblatt
The Donald C. and Laura M. Harrison Family Foundation

Hilton
iTheatrics
The Austin E. Knowlton Foundation
The Lehrer-Seller Family
Lila Gallimore Trust
The H.B., E.W., and F.R. Luther Charitable Foundation, Fifth Third Bank and Narley L. Haley, co-trustees
James & Lauren Miller
Music Theatre International
Ohio Arts Council
The Daniel & Susan Pfau Foundation
William O. Purdy, Jr. Foundation Fund
The Shubert Foundation
Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP
All of the individual donors