



2020 Annual Report





Roberts Academy students, Cincinnati

Highlights from the 2019-20 School Year

- **JumpStart Theatre teachers and students** dealing with cancelled shows showed creativity and resiliency in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, and many schools were able to complete all or parts of their shows virtually.
- **The University of Michigan’s School of Music and Dance** became the local partner as JumpStart Theatre launched in Detroit. Three Detroit public middle schools have been selected to begin the program in 2020-2021. This marks the first partnership with a university, which could open the door for future partnerships with similar institutions
- **The Children’s Theatre of Cincinnati** added three more schools, for a total of 15. Cincinnati now has nine JumpStart Theatre graduates that continue to build momentum and sustain their programs. Thus far, Cincinnati schools have seen 100% sustainability from JST graduate schools, despite staff and administration turnover.
- **La Jolla Playhouse** had a strong year with six San Diego area schools participating in the program.
- **First year partners**, The Alliance Theatre in Atlanta and Mountain City Center for the Arts in Frostburg, Maryland got off to a strong start despite a short year, leading three schools each for their first year and selecting three more for 2020-21.
- **Three St. Louis schools** will continue into their third year of the program with Stages.
- **The Shubert Foundation** continued its support in 2020, as did Music Theatre International and many individual and organizational 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.

The JumpStart Theatre Model

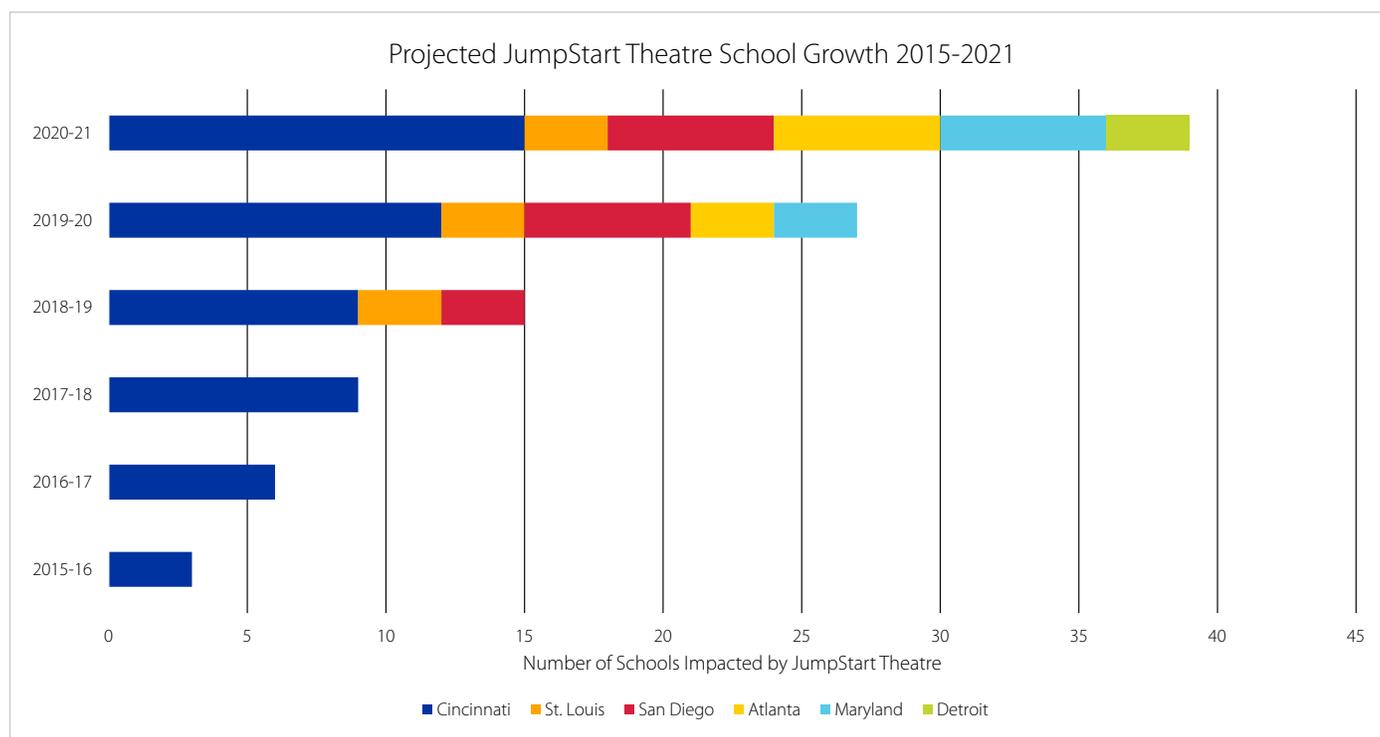
The Educational Theatre Foundation (ETF), in collaboration with iTheatrics and Music Theatre International (MTI), created JumpStart Theatre (JST), a three-year scalable program designed to build sustainable musical theatre programs in schools that currently do not have access to theatre.

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

Learn more about the JumpStart Theatre Program [here](#).



Boot Camps: Raising the Bar for Professional Development

“It set a whole new bar for professional development. It won't ever be matched anywhere else. I felt like a sponge every time. It was a great way to spend the day doing while learning.” - Katherine Johnson, Garrett Middle School Teacher, Atlanta

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. 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.



From left to right: Boot camps in Atlanta, Cincinnati, and La Jolla

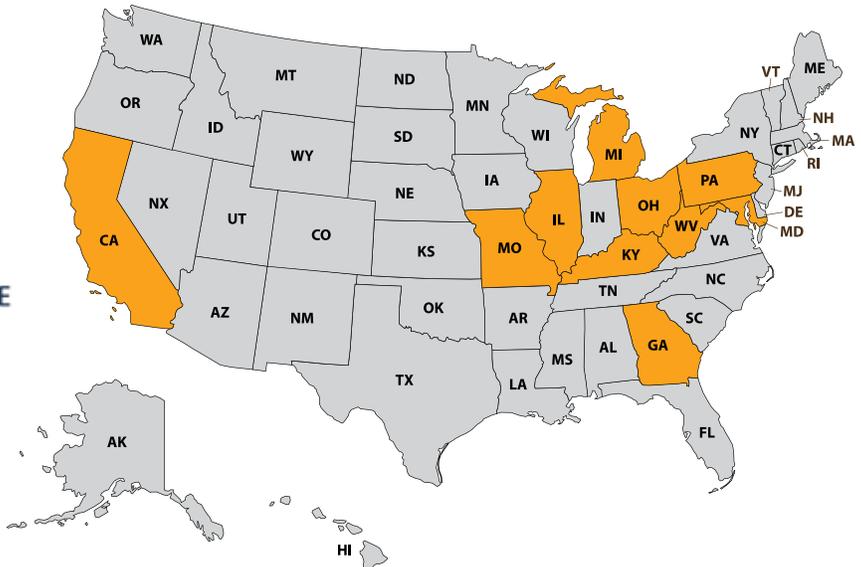
“When you are doing these exercises that aren’t strictly academic, it puts you into a different state of mind. Classroom teachers can implement some of these exercises that only take five minutes and make such a difference in the overall scheme of the students’ learning process.” - Chik Fung, Hartwell Elementary School Teacher, Cincinnati region



Paul Tran with student

For Paul Tran, a JumpStart Theatre teacher at Clark Montessori High School in Cincinnati, the program has not only brought positive changes to his school and community, but in his personal life as well. In 2019, The Children’s Theatre of Cincinnati provided free tickets to their production of *Santa Claus: The Musical* to all JumpStart Theatre schools. It was the first musical Paul had ever seen, an exciting experience. Additionally, he credits the JumpStart Theatre professional development with bringing him out of his shell. “The boot camps really got me out of my comfort zone. I’ve always been the math and science guy, quiet and observant, but as I have gone through each boot camp, I’ve become more and more relaxed and I feel like I’ve transformed into a person who can just jump up, not care who is looking at me, and dance and sing and feel like I fit in with other people in other schools.”

National Expansion Continues Thanks to Strong Partnerships



To benefit underserved children nationally, ETF reached out to producing theatres with strong education departments. 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.

Year	Partner	Location
2017	La Jolla Playhouse	San Diego, California
	Stages	St. Louis, Missouri
2018	Alliance Theatre	Atlanta, Georgia
	Mountain City Center for the Arts	Frostburg, Maryland
	The Children’s Theatre (to continue pilot)	Cincinnati, Ohio
2020	University of Michigan/Detroit Public Schools	Detroit, Michigan

Congratulations, Cincinnati Graduates!



Clark Montessori High School students



Roberts Academy students in The Lion King JR.

“We have students trying out that have never been in a play of any kind before. It’s fun to watch our older students as they give pointers about how to project their voices or how to breathe to not be so nervous. It is surely the talk of the middle school!” - Bizzy Robertson, *Felicity-Franklin Middle School, Cincinnati*

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 with March 2020 musicals in progress when the COVID-19 pandemic caused school closures nationwide. The second cohort of schools (Aiken New Tech High School, Dater High School, Felicity-Franklin Middle School) completed the program in May 2019, all with spring 2020 musicals in progress. A third cohort (Oyler School, Roberts Academy and Clark Montessori High School) graduated in 2020.

These nine schools are now considered JumpStart Theatre “graduates,” and ETF will maintain contact to continue to report on sustainability of their JST programs. 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 are in the process of selecting their 2020-21 shows and are excited to continue their success. Highlights of their year include:

- [Holmes Middle School Added a Fall Play to Their Season](#)
- [Dater High School Secured a New Performance Space through Volunteer Work](#)
- [Celebrating 2020 Graduates](#)

2019-2020 Productions

“I’m awestruck at how you were able to do this virtually. This is a testament to the fact that you can really do anything, this was absolutely amazing, I’m speechless and I never get speechless. If this was what you can do in virtual environment, I can’t wait to see it in person!” - Ron Garlington, Young Middle School Administrator, Atlanta region

Typically, each JST school performs at least twice, once for the student body and once for parents and the community. After the school performances, a regional showcase is held to bring the schools together and celebrate the year. COVID-19 altered those carefully-laid plans this year, closing schools just before opening night. Two JumpStart Theatre schools were fortunate to have performances in early March: Roberts Academy in Cincinnati held one public performance of *The Lion King JR.* and Margaret Buerkle in St. Louis performed *Annie JR.*

The other 25 schools, faced with disappointed students and teachers, began to seek out unconventional performance methods in order to provide closure and keep students engaged. The results were a triumph, most schools were able to present their own unique solution, resulting in audio recordings of songs, live and recorded streams of monologues and scenes, and even a drive-in showing.

Learn more about how schools creatively confronted this challenge:

- [Virtual Theatre Creates Connections Outside the Classroom](#)
- [The Show Goes on for JumpStart Theatre Programs](#)



Roberts Academy students in The Lion King JR.



Students at Margaret Buerkle Middle School rehearsing

School	Musical	Region
Garrett Middle School	<i>Fame JR.</i>	Atlanta
Pointe South Middle School	<i>Schoolhouse Rock Live! JR.</i>	Atlanta
Young Middle School	<i>Once on This Island JR.</i>	Atlanta
Aiken New Tech High School	<i>Singing in the Rain JR.</i>	Cincinnati
Clark Montessori High School	<i>Hairspray JR.</i>	Cincinnati
Dater High School	<i>The Little Mermaid JR.</i>	Cincinnati
Felicity-Franklin Middle School	<i>Aladdin JR.</i>	Cincinnati
Finneytown Middle School	<i>Once on This Island JR.</i>	Cincinnati
Gamble Montessori High School	<i>Beauty and the Beast JR.</i>	Cincinnati
Hartwell Elementary School	<i>Fame JR.</i>	Cincinnati
Holmes Middle School	<i>101 Dalmations KIDS</i>	Cincinnati
Liberty Bible Academy	<i>Annie JR.</i>	Cincinnati
Oyler School	<i>The Lion King JR.</i>	Cincinnati
Roberts Academy	<i>The Lion King JR.</i>	Cincinnati

School	Musical	Region
Summit Academy	<i>Once on This Island JR.</i>	Cincinnati
Northern Middle School	<i>Fame JR.</i>	Frostburg
Southern Middle School	<i>Seussical JR.</i>	Frostburg
Turkeyfoot Valley Area School District	<i>Annie JR.</i>	Frostburg
De Portola Middle School	<i>Guys and Dolls JR.</i>	San Diego
Innovation Middle	<i>Fame JR.</i>	San Diego
Knox Middle School	<i>Aladdin JR.</i>	San Diego
Los Coches Creek Middle School	<i>Annie JR.</i>	San Diego
Montgomery Middle STEAM Magnet	<i>Annie JR.</i>	San Diego
Taft Middle School	<i>Aladdin JR.</i>	San Diego
Coolidge Junior High School	<i>Fame JR.</i>	St. Louis
Cross Keys Middle School	<i>Seussical JR.</i>	St. Louis
Margaret Buerkle Middle School	<i>Annie JR.</i>	St. Louis

Community Impact

2019-2020 School Year

 **27** Schools
 **8** States: California, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania

 **738** Student Cast Members
 **201** Student Crew Members
 **144** Volunteers
 **87** Teachers

Since 2015 Launch

 **1,560** Student Cast Members
 **379** Student Crew Members
 **402** Volunteers

Impact on Individuals



Natalie

Margaret Buerkle Middle School, St. Louis

With more than six years of professional dance experience, 8th grader Natalie choreographed the middle school's first musical *Fame JR*. Natalie's arrangement was so successful, staff asked her to help with the Buerkle's spring production of *Annie JR*. Natalie carefully documents the lyrics to the songs, notes, and sketches of actors' locations and body positions in her choreography notebook. The cast attentively listens to Natalie, following her directions. Natalie is grateful for this opportunity to shine and said she learned how to teach by "watching my dance teachers and writing down the choreography in a way that made sense to me."

Anthony

Garrett Middle School, Atlanta

Anthony had a long history of getting in fights, he was tough and wanted people to know it. He needed a place to be, and be heard, and he found it in theatre class. Anthony got to be on stage and be the clown and the center of attention, then come off stage and relax. He started opening up about his life and his struggles. He stopped getting in fights. He would still get in arguments occasionally, but he started making an active effort to examine and take ownership of his emotions. He learned how theatre (something he thought of as "feminine," and hated being associated with at the beginning) could help him to be a better man. Anthony started taking an active role in class: gathering other students for warm-ups; volunteering for jobs; developing an interest in lighting. He even played the lead role in the extracurricular Black History Month play. His theatre teacher stated, "I am incredibly sad I won't get to spend the last couple months with this genuinely inspiring young man, but I know that this opportunity came to him at a critical turning point in his life, and I have no doubt that he will only keep growing into a leader and a better man from here."

What Students and Teachers are Saying About the Program

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.

“It's ok to feel silly - if you don't feel silly you aren't doing it right!”

- Liberty Bible Academy Student, Cincinnati

“We had a student labeled as gifted who was never coming to school. He ended up increasing his attendance to a 93% from around 20%. He's now in high school and to see the growth and the leader that he has become, we cry about it. The impact on him alone is amazing, we're a family.”

- Katie Fliehman, Oyler School Teacher, Cincinnati

“My friends and I are so excited now that we have a piece of something at school where we can be ourselves.”

- Frostburg student



Liberty Bible Academy students in rehearsal

“All you really have to do is listen to the music, listen again, and sing along with it the best that you can until you learn the lyrics.”

- Young Middle School student, Atlanta

“Our school is unique because we have a larger percentage of Latino students, ESL students. Our program immensely enhanced our Latino students’ willingness to communicate. The students have better attitudes, self-confidence. Theatre has helped us to recognize the struggles our kids face when they don’t speak the language and to see them grow and communicate.”

- Ligia Cuevas-Johnson, Roberts Academy Teacher, Cincinnati

“This has been quite a journey for all of us, and a lot of people would agree. I didn’t get to audition because I had another activity at the same time but my teachers still let me join the cast and I just wanted to thank them for that.”

- Atlanta student

“I researched my character and I tried to think about what my character would do in a certain situation and then I would make sure the director was okay with it.”

- Young Middle School student, Atlanta

“Because of the JumpStart Theatre program, students from Young Middle School have access to a theater education that supports their educational, social, and emotional well-being. The students not only have extended instruction by their certified professional arts educators, but also from leaders in the musical theater world. In addition to student learning, the professional learning of our teachers was positively impacted through step-by-step production planning assistance and artistic guidance.”

- Dr. Sara Womack, Fine and Performing Arts Coordinator of Atlanta Public Schools

“I am like a lot of my kids and always stand in the back, but today I am comfortable not being in the back because I am comfortable with all of you.”

- Kristin Grote, Liberty Bible Academy Teacher, Cincinnati

“My lead actress always went above and beyond the call. She was always there, always had a smile, and was always ready to go. She led the group to love the show as much as she did.”

- Abraham Anthony, III, Choir Director, Jean Childs Young Middle School, Atlanta

“JumpStart Theatre has changed the way our students look at school, they are more motivated. Students are now coming straight off the bus, jumping on to the stage with dancing and choreography. Some of these kids do not get to see musical theatre and it’s amazing to see their reactions, especially the parents. The community is so supportive of our school.”

- Paul Tran, Clark Montessori High School Teacher, Cincinnati



Roberts Academy students



Garrett Middle School student cast



Los Coches Creek Middle School students in Annie JR.



Holmes Middle School students in Jack and the Beanstalk JR.

“I am excited for next year, can’t wait for next year, when we will be able to put on our musical. I told them I will behave with my theatre decorum until the end and then I am going to scream for them as if I am at a football game. I love, love, love everything that has taken place and what it is doing for our students.”

- Darlisa Lyle, Garrett Middle School Teacher, Atlanta

“Theatre gives kids a space to mess up, it’s okay to fail, to not be great at first, you learn from it. That’s what I’m most excited about.”

- Katie Fliehman, Oyler School Teacher, Cincinnati

“I’m 38 and I still remember every single show I did when I was little. The relationship you have with your performing arts teacher is so special because they get you on another level. Thank you for dedicating your time to making this program grow and grow and creating these artists for the future.”

- Ricardo Aponte, JumpStart Theatre Mentor, Atlanta

“The bootcamps have equipped us, given us tools to take back to our schools and use with our students. Not just theatre tools, but competence building tools to teach our kids to let loose and have fun on stage and enjoy what makes theatre so special.”

- Alexis Curtis-Merritt, Liberty Bible Academy Teacher, Cincinnati

“I like that we are part of the process so it’s not just lecture. I learn by doing and seeing.”

- Kristin Grote, Liberty Bible Academy Teacher, Cincinnati

“I learned new ideas to incorporate not only into the theatre program, but into the entire school!”

- Cybil Brown, Hartwell Elementary School Administrator, Cincinnati



Student auditions in Frotstburg



Hartwell Elementary School students in Fame JR.

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 that appeared this year .

- [Jeffrey Seller, University of Michigan, Educational Theatre Foundation Announce Initiative to Bring Theatre Education to Detroit](#)
- [TCT Names Three Tri-State Schools for Fully-Funded JumpStart Theatre Program](#)
- [Innovation and Montgomery Join JumpStart Theatre as Cohort Two](#)

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 and organizational donors.

Conclusion

The JumpStart Theatre program will continue to 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, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. 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: Atlanta student via Zoom, Dance rehearsal at Garrett Middle School, Summit Academy student and teacher during rehearsal; Middle row from left to right: Garrett Middle School rehearsal, Los Coches Creek Set Design set design; Bottom row from left to right: Hartwell Elementary School students in dance rehearsal, Roberts Academy students in rehearsal

Thanks to All JumpStart Theatre Partners and Supporters

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