

# performing statistics

Reflecting on  
three years at the  
intersection of  
art and activism



We are forever grateful to the young people who form the foundation of this project. Every year they courageously offer their vulnerability, their stories, and their visions for a better world. Working within the same systems this project is calling to transform presents many challenges, one of which renders our young people invisible to society. Performing Statistics attempts to overcome those challenges while staying committed to system-involved youth, so for all the times we are unallowed to show their faces or say their names, we acknowledge that Performing Statistics would not be making an impact without them, first and foremost.

This report is the culmination of a yearlong evaluation process developed and implemented by Chris Dwyer of RMC Research with support from the Performing Statistics staff. We are grateful to Pam Korza for that initial introduction.

Project Director Trey Hartt developed the concept for this report with editing support from ART 180 and Performing Statistics staff. Jason Killinger ([jasonkillinger.com](http://jasonkillinger.com)) designed it, and the following people provided feedback. We are also grateful for them.

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Note: the data and resources, as well as people's titles, contained in this report were current as of 2019.

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Jennifer Hurst-Wender, Preservation  
Virginia  
Heidi Pinkston, Piedmont Arts

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# Radical Imagination

***"We find our passions in the field, not in lock up."***

This simple sentence from a participant in our summer advocacy intensive in 2017 captures so many of the reasons why youth prisons don't work. We're also reminded of the Nelson Mandela quote, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." For far too long we have cast aside young people who are already on the margins, leaving families broken and communities devastated by racist systemic policies that do little in the way of our country's motto, "E pluribus unum." Out of many, one.

This report captures a fraction of what is possible when we invest in youth and connect their voices to the stakeholders whose decisions greatly impact them. We began with a question: "How would juvenile justice reform differ if it were led by currently and formerly incarcerated youth?" What follows is a deep look at that answer from three years of work in Richmond, Virginia (2016-2018), through Performing Statistics, a former program of ART 180. You'll read about the issues driving this work, its short history, and the people and strategies employed to drive change. Then you'll dig deeper into the Performing Statistics theory of change, its core elements, and the impact the project has had on youth, adults, public perspectives, and laws, policies, and procedures.

We hope this report provides you a foundation to actualize your own hopes and dreams, the details to understand where your mission fits on a continuum of work around the world that uses art to center the voices of impacted people. The story that follows is one of complex partnerships, of deep trust, of learning and growing with a bit of failure and grandiose expectations sprinkled on top. We recognize that this report just scratches the surface, and it does not provide all the answers. We encourage you to read this alongside reports, studies, and publications produced by other similar projects, particularly projects led by impacted people. (In this context "impacted people" is defined by the change that the project wishes to see.)

Performing Statistics is a shape-shifter grounded in the belief that the experts society needs to listen to in order to make progressive change are the people whose daily lived experiences are most impacted and would most benefit from that change, and that art is a vehicle that best expresses that vision and radical imagination<sup>1</sup>. This will be repeated many times throughout the report, and still it can't be stated enough. The project is heavily informed by adrienne maree brown's *Emergent Strategy*; by Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; by Maggie L. Walker, Angela Davis, bell hooks, and other radical, black feminists; by artists connected through the Alternate ROOTS network and their *Principles of Community Engagement*; by the work of Augusto Boal, Suzanne Lacy, Laurie Jo Reynolds, Gran Fury, and artists in the contemporary "social practice art" movement; by brilliant lawyers like Michelle Alexander and Bryan Stevenson; and by everyone fighting to dismantle current systems that are simply not working for the people in order to build a world that prioritizes beauty and justice.





Our project is informed by our ancestors, responsive to our current social and political climate, and driven by the collective hope we have in the future.

In a recent summer intensive with ART 180, "O" said, "I want to be an astronomer, but down here I have to stand on the toilet to see the stars." We hope you'll use the information in this report to break down the physical and metaphorical walls that confine teens like "O," lift him up so that one day he can touch the stars.

In solidarity,  
Trey Hartt, Project Director  
Mark Strandquist, Creative Director  
Gina Lyles, Program Manager



# Understanding the Issues

In 2015, the Center for Public Integrity reported that Virginia referred more youth to law enforcement for in-school discipline issues than any other state in the country. Thankfully this statistic has changed, but it was the catalyzing statistic that energized RISE for Youth, Virginia's leading juvenile justice reform advocacy group and our core advocacy partner, as well as Performing Statistics. This and other statistics began to prove what communities, particularly communities of color, had known for generations: we have a school-to-prison pipeline crisis. While the referral rate to law enforcement has slowed, other data such as the cost for incarceration, the numbers of suspensions and expulsions, and the disproportionate rate at which young people of color are system-involved (mostly African American and Latin/x), in addition to a handful of stats listed in this section, demonstrate that the crisis is far from over. In some cases, it's just getting worse. This is our call to action.

# RICHMOND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Data sources included as endnotes on page 58.

## 3,821 Students Suspended in 2016-17



In 2017, Richmond city was ranked #6 for highest overall statewide for # of students short-term suspended at least once.



**19.64%**

of all African American students



**2.14%**

of all white students



**25.02%**

of disabled students



**13.34%**

of non-disabled students

## 1,026 Students Referred to Law Enforcement in 2015-16

Up until recently, despite the frequency of student-police interactions, Virginia did not require School Resource Officers to be trained specifically in working with youth. Further, schools are not required to negotiate memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with local law enforcement, resulting in ambiguity regarding the role of police in schools.



**89.8%**  
were African  
American  
students

**5.6%**  
were  
Hispanic  
students

**2.3%**  
were  
white  
students

**23/1000**

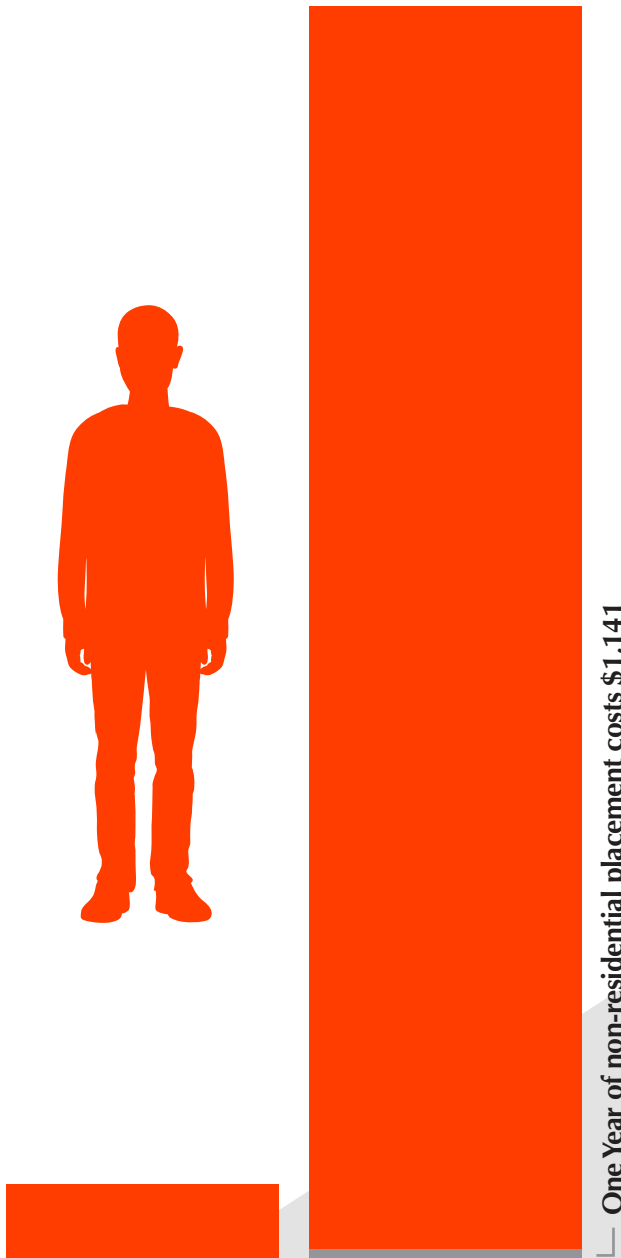
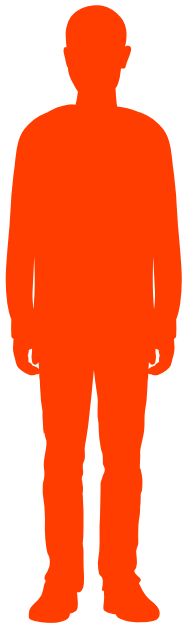
The rate of school referrals to law enforcement statewide for Black students

**9/1000**

The rate of school referrals to law enforcement statewide for white students

# YOUTH INCARCERATION IN VIRGINIA

**8,009**  
**8-17 year-olds**  
**incarcerated**  
**in 2017**

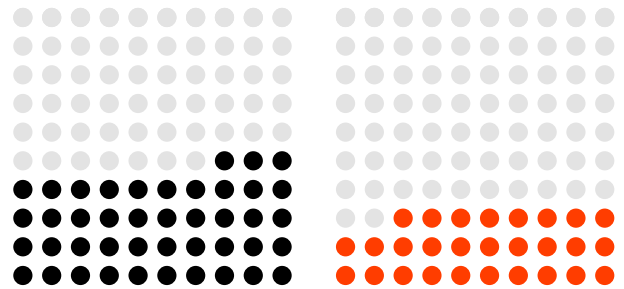


**\$12,171**  
 One Year of Education

**\$214,207**  
 One Year of Incarceration  
 in a State-run Youth Prison

— One Year of non-residential placement costs \$1,141

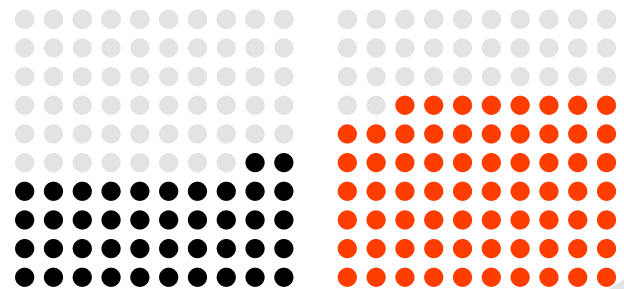
## RACE



## WHITE YOUTH

**47.3%**  
 of all intakes

**27.7%**  
 Committed to DJJ Care



## BLACK YOUTH

**42%**  
 of all intakes

**68.1%**  
 Committed to DJJ Care

**Black** youth in Virginia were **seven** times more likely than white youth to be incarcerated; and Latino youth are almost **2.5 times** more likely than white youth to be incarcerated.

WHITE  
 YOUTH



LATINO  
 YOUTH

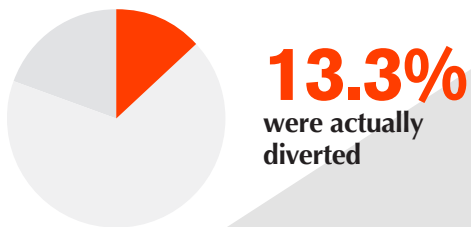
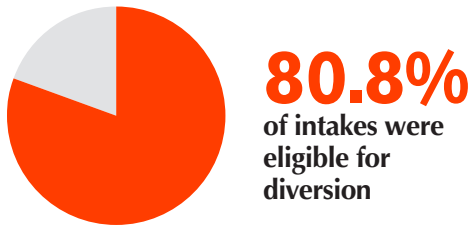


BLACK  
 YOUTH

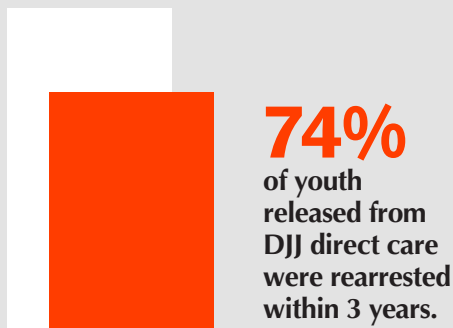




## DIVERSION



## RECIDIVISM



According to a GBA Strategies poll on youth justice reform in Virginia, released in February 2017, 80% of Virginians favor keeping young people out of harmful, ineffective prisons. The survey of over 500 adults found that:

**91%** support treatment and rehabilitation plans that include a youth's family in planning and services

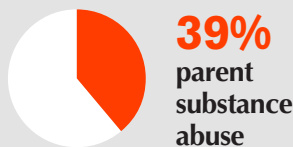
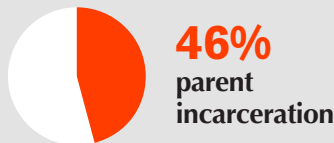
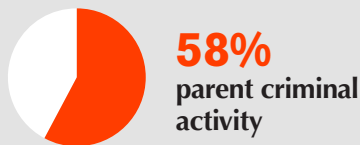
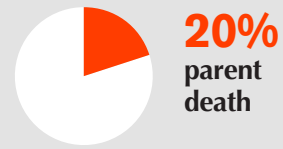
**78%** support requiring states to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the youth justice system

**89%** support providing financial incentives for states and municipalities to invest in alternatives to youth incarceration, such as intensive rehabilitation, education, job training, community services, and programs that provide youth the opportunity to repair harm to victims and communities

**77%** support increasing funding to provide more public defenders to represent children in court

In 2017, 89.8% of committed youth appeared to have significant symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Substance Abuse Disorder, or Substance Dependence Disorder; 63.6% appeared to have significant symptoms of other mental health disorders.

## SIGNIFICANT TRAUMA EXPOSURE



**89%**  
reported at least one of the above.

**50%**  
reported three or more of the above

# Understanding the Project

Performing Statistics began as a one-time concept that grew into an established program of ART 180 before becoming an independent project in July 2019. Over the years, it has also been referred to as the Youth Self-Advocacy Through Art program, the Self-Advocacy program, ART 180's juvenile justice program, or sometimes even mistaken for RISE for Youth. Whatever it is called, consistency and thoroughness have been part of the work combining a high-quality aesthetic with honest stories from the lived experiences of youth navigating the juvenile justice system. This section chronicles the project's history, the structure and logic model that drove decision-making, the many partners involved, and the varied strategies to affect change.



# HISTORY <sup>6</sup>

## JANUARY - MAY 2014

Mark begins developing "Performing Statistics, New Monuments" that, "explores the complexities of systemic issues, while working with teens to develop the skills, networks, and space to creatively reimagine their futures." Originally supposed to take place in Washington, DC as an expansion of his Windows From Prison project, the project shifts to Richmond, VA where he asks to partner with ART 180.

## AUGUST 2014

Legal Aid Justice Center's JustChildren program becomes a core partner with strong support from attorney Jeree Thomas who launched their juvenile justice reform campaign, RISE for Youth, a few months earlier; Magnum Foundation Fund and Puffin Foundation make their first grants to Mark in support of the project.

## NOVEMBER 2014

Mark proposes to change the name of the project to Bureau of Creative Community Action, but the name doesn't stick.

## DECEMBER 2014

ART 180 and Legal Aid Justice Center staff present their program concept to the local Court Service Unit leadership team, a division of the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice. The partnership is approved!

## JUNE 15-19, 2015

Performing Statistics participates in 1708 Gallery's 10x10 exhibition and organizes its first public programming under the title, *From Cradle to Prison: using art to disrupt the criminal justice system*. Support for this week of programming comes from Alternate ROOTS through their Learning Exchange program and PhotoWings. This is a pivotal moment for the project to publicly announce itself while working with community members to collectively define the program's vision. This is also when the project is first introduced to the Richmond Police Department through a teen/police town hall initiated by the ART 180 Teen Leadership Council and led by Albert Walker, ART 180 board member.

## JUNE 2014

ART 180 agrees to partner on the project. Other early partners include Open Minds VCU and 1708 Gallery. Mark and Trey begin working closely to build the project at ART 180 and across the City of Richmond.

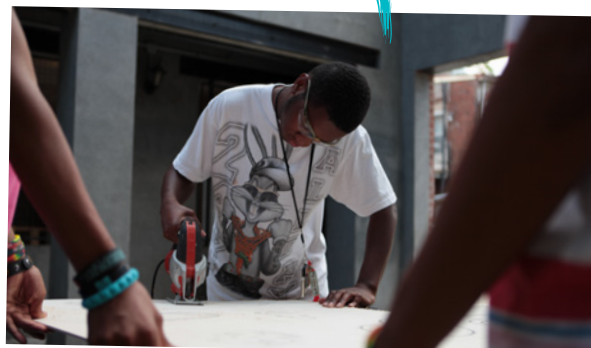


## SEPTEMBER 2014

1708 Gallery hosts a gathering of potential partners and collaborators to deepen the project in Richmond, facilitated by Mark and Trey. Participants include 1708 Gallery, Richmond Peace Education Center, The Conciliation Project, VCUarts Department of Photography & Film, Partners in the Arts, the Richmond City Library, Kristin Reed from the VCU University College, Storefront for Community Design, Anne Jordan from the VCU Injury & Violence Prevention Program, Dennis Williams, and DJ Mikemetic.

## SPRING 2015

Mark collaborates with Open Minds VCU and Thomas Jefferson High School on a Windows from Prison project, a precursor to work that will inform the larger Performing Statistics curriculum. Mark also works with ART 180's Teen Leadership Council on a program, led by Mickael Broth and Brionna Nomi, to create a physical representation of the school-to-prison pipeline.





**JUNE-AUGUST 2015**

The first full summer advocacy intensive takes place with teens from the Richmond Juvenile Detention Center post-dispositional program and teens from ART 180's Teen Leadership Council. Participants from the detention center are transported from the jail to ART 180's Atlas teen art center, are allowed to wear their own clothes, and work three days a week for eight weeks on a variety of projects speaking about their experiences in the system and their vision for a world where no youth are locked up. Guests artists include Molly Fair, DJ Mikemetic, and Terry Brown. This becomes the early model for the current program. Gina Lyles joins the project as a program leader.

**OCTOBER 26, 2015**

The first training for Richmond Police Department recruits takes place inside the exhibition led by Trey Hartt and Taekia Glass (ART 180), Jeree Thomas (Legal Aid Justice Center), and Tracey Wells-Huggins (Justice4Families). This begins a long-standing partnership with RPD and the development of the Performing Statistics police engagement initiative.

**JULY 2015**

Mark Strandquist (Performing Statistics) and Jeree Thomas (Legal Aid Justice Center) are invited to represent the project for the Catalyst Initiative, a project of the Center for Performance and Civic Practice.

**AUGUST 2015**

Performing Statistics is awarded a Partners in Action grant from Alternate ROOTS to support arts and non-arts sector partnership and community engagement.

**AUGUST 2015**

ART 180 and Legal Aid Justice Center's JustChildren program formalize their commitment to work together and begin the Robins Foundation Community Innovation Grant proposal process.

**SEPTEMBER 4, 2015**

500 people attend the first Performing Statistics exhibition at ART 180's Atlas gallery in Richmond, Virginia. This work becomes the foundation for pop-up exhibitions, workshops, speaking engagements, and trainings across Virginia that address juvenile justice reform and the model for future exhibitions. The exhibition includes an interactive component allowing visitors to hear directly from the youth who created the artwork, marking the first of many ways the project combines art and immersive technologies.

**OCTOBER 29, 2015**

The Performing Statistics exhibition is used as a backdrop for a town hall with the Director of Virginia's Department of Juvenile Justice, Andy Block, to discuss the future of Virginia's juvenile justice system. This is an early example of ways the project uses arts and culture to connect with policymakers.





### NOVEMBER 6, 2015

The first “Juvenile Justice Parade for Incarcerated Youth” transforms the teens’ artwork into a mobile people-powered art exhibition. Participants walk the art from Virginia’s General Assembly building, down Richmond’s main street during rush hour, to ART 180’s gallery, elevating the youth voices, earning a flurry of exposure in the media, and drawing attention to the school-to-prison pipeline, all just months prior to crucial votes in Virginia’s General Assembly on juvenile justice reform. This sets the stage for the annual *Justice Parade for Youth*.



### FEBRUARY 2016

Performing Statistics becomes a Youth First Initiative national partner. Da’Quon Beaver and Tonya Osinkosky are hired as RISE for Youth’s new community organizers.

### FEBRUARY 15, 2016

The first Youth Lobby Day is organized by RISE for Youth and the first Performing Statistics newspaper is used to support youth-led organizing and advocacy, designed by Bizhan Khodabandeh. 6,000 copies are printed and distributed across Virginia over the next year.



### NOVEMBER 13-14, 2015

Performing Statistics participates in 1708 Gallery’s InLight festival introducing the project to tens of thousands of attendees and gathering hundreds of petition signatures in support of the RISE for Youth campaign.

### DECEMBER 1, 2015

ART 180 is awarded the Robins Foundation Community Innovation Grant, a \$500,000 award spread over three years to transform Performing Statistics from a project to a program of ART 180 and Legal Aid Justice Center. The program name Self-Advocacy Through Art is officially adopted. (The title Performing Statistics never quite disappeared.)

### JANUARY 7, 2016

ART 180 and RISE for Youth organize a strong contingent at the public budget hearings held by the Virginia General Assembly using the art to declare “Prisons Don’t Work!” Audio recordings of poems created by teens in the summer intensive are played alongside public testimony. This defining advocacy moment for the collaboration helps slow proposed legislation to build new youth prisons in Virginia and becomes an annual event for the project.

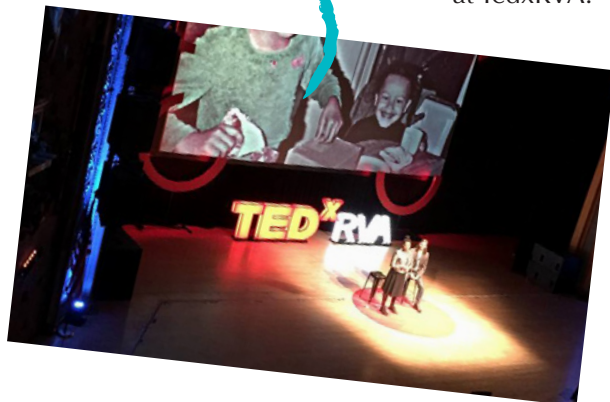


### APRIL 2016

Mark is hired as Creative Director and Gina as Program Coordinator to run the Performing Statistics project, and Trey is promoted to Deputy Director of ART 180 assuming more official responsibilities to manage the project.

**APRIL 8, 2016**

Gina and Trey present their talk, "How can we create a world where no youth are locked up?" at TedxRVA.



**JULY 2016**

Mark attends the Creative Change summit, organized by The Opportunity Agenda. He pitches the virtual reality concept for the first time and meets artists from Scenic VR who later help make that idea a reality.

**JULY 2016**

JustChildren attorney, RISE for Youth Coordinator, and founding partner Jeree Thomas leaves Legal Aid Justice Center to join the Campaign for Youth Justice.

**SEPTEMBER 2016**

Valerie Slater is hired as the new Legal Aid Justice Center Attorney and RISE for Youth Coordinator.

**OCTOBER 7, 2016**

The newest Performing Statistics exhibition, "I Am Powerful," opens at ART 180's Atlas gallery. It runs through November and attracts 800 people to the gallery.



**JUNE-AUGUST 2016**

Second summer advocacy intensive takes place with guest artists Kate DeCiccio, John Blake, Holly Bass, Omolara Williams McAllister, Terry Brown, Studio Two Three, and a special etching collaboration with Big Secret. Teens create photography, visual art, short films, and poetry.

**JUNE 25, 2016**

Youth for RISE launches with support from the Robins Foundation grant. This is RISE for Youth's new youth advocacy network.



**AUGUST 2016**

Performing Statistics uses the creative work to engage 60 recruits and officers with a new training workshop focused on adolescent brain development, trauma, and teen/police interaction. Dr. Hayley Cleary is brought on as a collaborator. The workshop coincides with a town hall informed by theatre of the oppressed principles, developed with support from Michael Rohd and Pam Korza (Center for Performance and Civic Practice), attracting 150 community members.



**NOVEMBER 2016**

Performing Statistics is awarded a second PhotoWings grant.



**NOVEMBER 4, 2016**

The second annual Justice Parade for Youth starts on the steps of Richmond City Hall and travels down Broad Street once again toward ART 180's Atlas gallery. City of Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney (then, Mayor-elect) participates.



**APRIL 2017**

Rachael Deane is hired as the new JustChildren Legal Director and subsequently hires Rebecca Keel and James Braxton as the new RISE for Youth community organizers.

**APRIL 2017**

The first Performing Statistics curriculum is printed, developed in collaboration with Dr. Courtnie Wolfgang and Tesni Stephens, and designed by the Polychrome Collective.

**APRIL 12, 2017**

Performing Statistics leads a workshop for 50 educators on ways to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline in the classroom and introduces the curriculum. This was hosted by the VCU School of Education and VCUarts Department of Art Education.

**APRIL 20-23 2017**

Performing Statistics hosts *ROOTS Weekend Richmond*, a weeklong series of workshops and events highlighting ways artists address mass incarceration organized by Alternate ROOTS in partnership with Arts in a Changing America.

**MAY 30, 2017**

Performing Statistics leads another recruit training for the Richmond Police Department. This time the team includes Tracey Wells-Huggins, Michael O'Bryan, Gina, Mark, and Trey, and becomes the structure they will use to train the Richmond City Police Department moving forward. The training addresses the impact of trauma and chronic stress on the adolescent brain, police/teen interaction, and the impact arrest and incarceration have on families.

**DECEMBER 15, 2016**

Performing Statistics is awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Creativity Connects grant<sup>7</sup>, one of 36 projects nationwide to receive the award.

**JANUARY 2017**

Gina Lyles is promoted to full-time Program Manager in order to better manage the increasing workload for the project, particularly youth engagement and case management. A new Performing Statistics newspaper is printed with art direction by Michael Wright that incorporates augmented reality making teens audio poems, videos, and more accessible to readers with smartphones..



**MARCH 2017**

Performing Statistics is accepted as a project of PolicyLink's Arts, Culture, and Equitable Development Initiative, supported by the Kresge Foundation, providing support for the project's police engagement work. Shine Global begins a documentary project focused on the state of juvenile justice in Virginia and the power of art to bring the voices of system-involved youth to decision-makers.

**APRIL 10-17, 2017**

The project designs a major exhibition at Virginia Commonwealth University for their Common Book Program, which features a lecture by Bryan Stevenson. Mr. Stevenson visits the exhibition and meets with the project's teen participants who created the work and members of Youth for RISE. The exhibition engages tens of thousands of VCU students and faculty.



## JUNE 2017

Performing Statistics is awarded a grant from the Wilbur Moreland Havens Charitable Foundation, a local family foundation in Richmond.



## JUNE-AUGUST 2017

Third summer intensive takes place with guest artists Kate DeCiccio, Roscoe Burnems, Catherine Komp, and Scenic VR, a virtual reality production studio from NYC. The teens create photography, stenciled portraits, poetry, and a virtual reality experience that places the viewer directly in a youth prison cell.



## OCTOBER 5, 2017

"My Reality" opens at ART 180's Atlas Gallery, the project's third major exhibition and newly-constructed recreation of a youth prison cell that utilizes the virtual reality experience. The opening and large public events function more like live theatre performances with youth playing correctional officers who "process" visitors and lead them through the many immersive experiences throughout the exhibition. The exhibition was co-designed by Mark and artist Brandon Skillin.

## NOVEMBER 1, 2017

Police training initiative incorporates virtual reality film for the first time.



## NOVEMBER 2017

Thanks to the organizing efforts of RISE for Youth and the collective efforts of the project, a proposal to build a new youth prison in Chesapeake, Virginia is stopped.

## JANUARY 2018

ART 180 is awarded an inaugural Art for Justice Fund grant to support ongoing program implementation and evaluation. Trey leaves his position as staff Deputy Director to become contract Project Director of Performing Statistics.

## JANUARY 2018

The Performing Statistics exhibition takes residence within the office building used to temporarily house members of the Virginia General Assembly, placing the creative work in direct proximity to legislators and advocates and helping advance key suspension/expulsion legislation.

## APRIL 2018

Performing Statistics is featured in *Creating Place: The Art of Equitable Community Development* published by Alternate ROOTS.



## APRIL 12-13, 2018

Performing Statistics is featured at the 2018 PolicyLink Equity Summit with over 4,000 attendees, as part of the Arts, Culture, and Equitable Development Initiative.





#### **JUNE-AUGUST 2018**

Fourth annual summer advocacy intensive with ART 180 features visual artist Kate DeCiccio; filmmakers Lauren McCann, Ben Saunders, Alex Dimitriadis and educators Stuart Harnsberger, Jessica Diaz, Cluny Brown, Sarah Pedersen, and Kim Tolbert. The teens create photography, visual art, a short documentary, and a school-based curriculum for educators. Much of the work focuses on school push-out.

#### **AUGUST 1, 2018**

RISE for Youth officially splits from the Legal Aid Justice Center to become an independent entity.

#### **OCTOBER 5, 2018**

The fourth annual exhibition, "Lift Us Up, Don't Push Us Out!" sees 800 people attend the exhibition opening, the largest opening in the project's history as well as in the history of ART 180's Atlas gallery. Hundreds more--including the police chief, mayor, director of juvenile justice, staff from the local juvenile courts, and state senators and delegates--experience the exhibition.

#### **OCTOBER 25, 2018**

The Art for Justice Fund awards its second grant to Performing Statistics, a planning grant to develop the concept and strategy to become an independent organization, separate from ART 180.

#### **NOVEMBER 28-30 2018**

Mark and Trey represent Performing Statistics at the inaugural Art for Justice Fund convening in New Orleans that brings together projects and individual artists and advocates from across the country who are working to end mass incarceration.

#### **JANUARY 2019**

Performing Statistics enters a six-month planning process to determine its future and expand both local efforts and national impact.

#### **JULY 2019**

Performing Statistics transitions from ART 180 to become a fiscally sponsored project of Social & Environmental Entrepreneurs.

#### **FUNDERS THROUGHOUT PROJECT HISTORY**

Magnum Foundation Fund

Puffin Foundation

Pollination Project

PhotoWings

Alternate ROOTS Partners in Action program, supported by The Nathan Cummings Foundation and Surdna Foundation, along with the Ford Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Center for Performance and Civic Practice

Wilbur Moreland Havens Charitable Foundation

Robins Foundation

National Endowment for the Arts Creativity Connects Grant

PolicyLink Arts, Culture, and Equitable Development Initiative, supported by the Kresge Foundation

Art for Justice Fund

## MODEL AND STRUCTURE

We firmly believe we cannot create change in isolation. From the beginning we asked the key question, “who is missing from this conversation?” Performing Statistics began with Mark bringing organizations together around a common cause and question, and the project was developed over time through the creative youth development methodology of ART 180, the policy and advocacy expertise of our legal and organizing partners, the cultural organizing background of the program’s core staff, and the lived experiences of the credible messengers<sup>8</sup> who were integrally woven throughout the program.

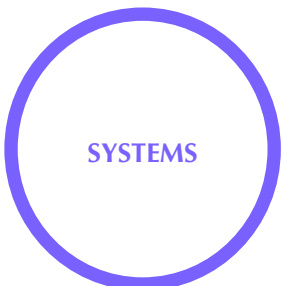
**The Performing Statistics model relies on three main groups, each with their own distinct structure and focus:**



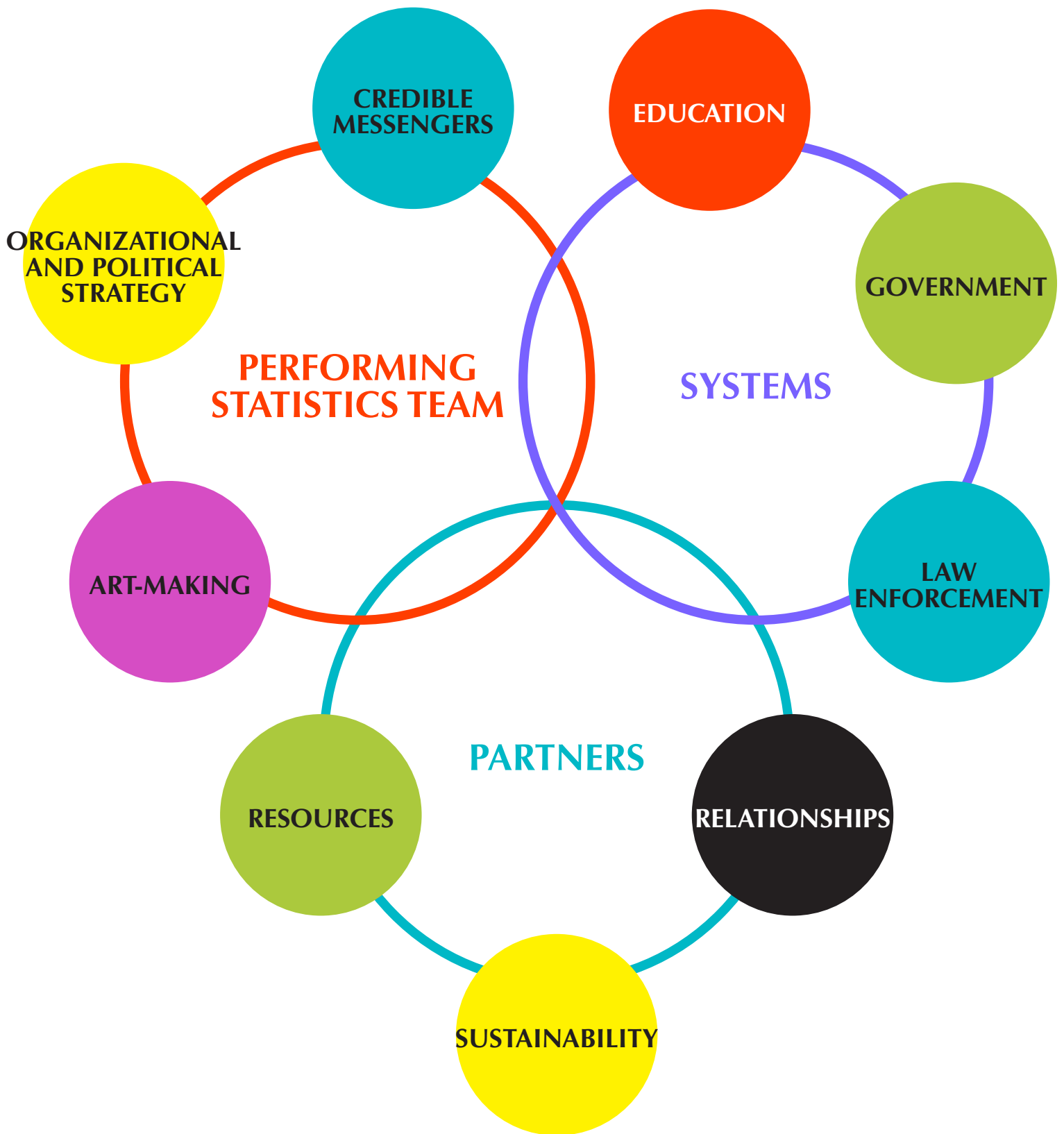
A core group of cultural organizing and youth development professionals who use art to guide the process for connecting youth to system stakeholders. This team incorporates **art-making**, **credible messengers**, and **organizational and political strategy** to impact youth, adults, and the laws, policies, and procedures that reinforce the school-to-prison pipeline.



Performing Statistics partners with people rooted in a particular place. Partners bring **resources**, **relationships**, and **sustainability** to the work. For example, in Virginia we partner with RISE for Youth who works primarily in Richmond, Hampton Roads, and southwest Virginia. They maintain a statewide coalition and support localized organizers and organizing strategies that shift laws and policies concerning Virginia’s juvenile justice system at both state and local levels.



Our program targets the **Education**, **Law Enforcement**, and **Government** systems that form the primary institutional structure of the school-to-prison pipeline. Our team along with local partners engage in power mapping and relationship building to connect the cultural organizing work to systems stakeholders. Our belief is that building empathy and knowledge among the people in the system by connecting them with the people most impacted by their decisions is a vital element to creating sustainable change.



## WHO WAS INVOLVED

The following list outlines the people and organizations who were integral to Performing Statistics from 2016-2018.

- Program staff at ART 180, RISE for Youth, and Legal Aid Justice Center
- Educators in the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Education, University College, and VCUarts Department of Art Education
- Guest artists who led portions of our summer advocacy intensive: Holly Bass, John Blake, Terry Brown, Roscoe Burnems, Kate DeCiccio, Alex Dimitriadis, Molly Fair, Catherine Komp, Mikemetic, Omolara Williams McAllister, Lauren McCann, Ben Saunders, staff and artists at Studio Two Three (a local community print shop in Richmond), and Gary Hustwit and Maya Tippet from Scenic VR (a virtual reality studio based in NYC)
- Educators in the Richmond Metro Area: Stuart Harnsberger, Jessica Diaz, Cluny Brown, and Kim Tolbert
- Local advocates: I Vote for Me, the Richmond Dignity in Schools Coalition, and Teachers for Social Justice
- Systems partners: Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, Richmond Department of Justice Services and the Richmond Juvenile Detention Center, the 13th District Court Services Unit, and the Richmond Police Department

## VALUES

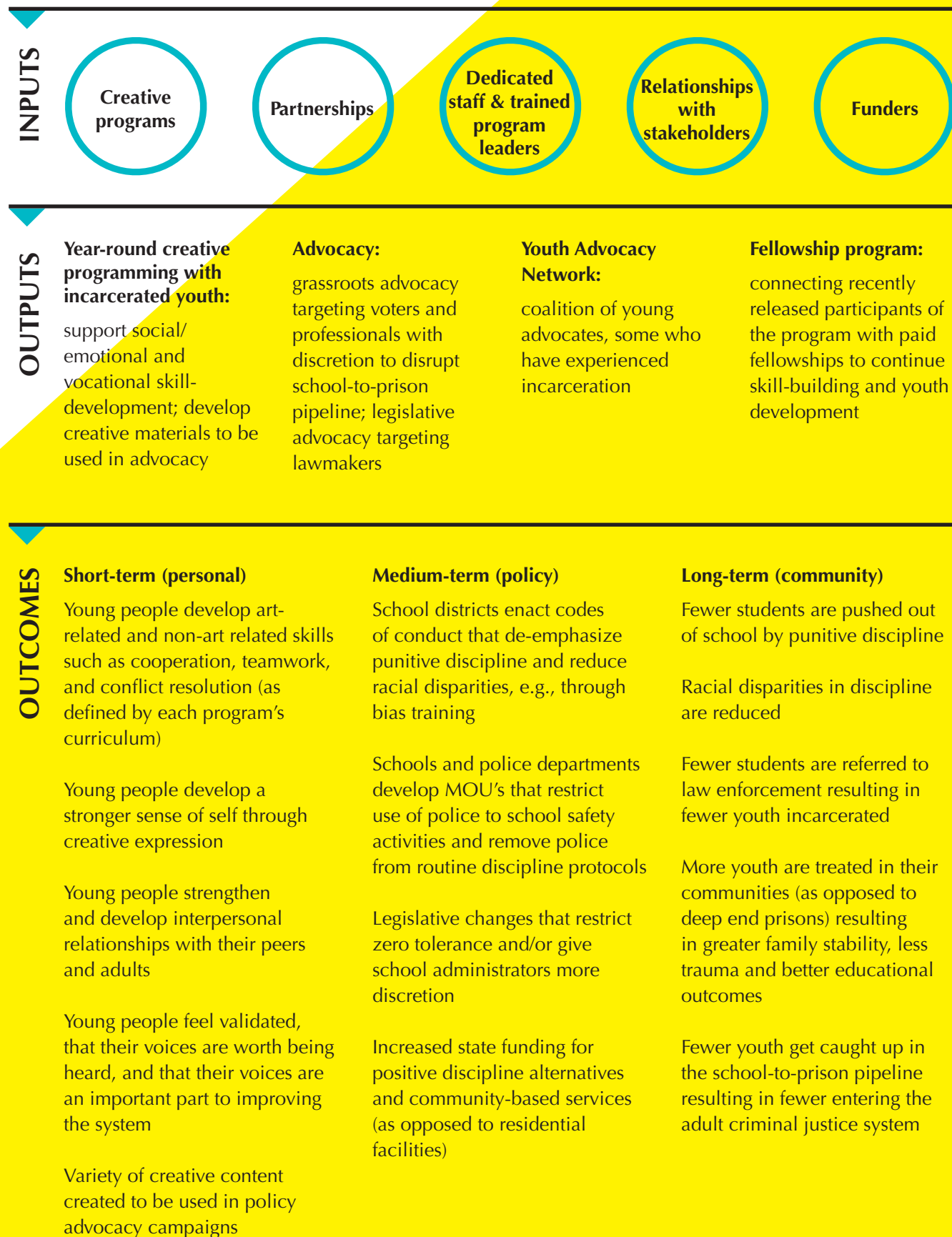
ART 180, Legal Aid Justice Center, and RISE for Youth staff agreed early in the program's life to live by and make decisions according to a set of values.

- **We value youth first.**
- **We value change, tenacity, excellence, boldness, creativity, and critical thinking.**
- **We support youth in building leadership and other skills that will help their futures.**
- **We value honesty and transparency within ourselves, each other, and in our communities in pursuit of justice.**
- **We value self-love and the empowerment of the youth with whom we work.**



## LOGIC MODEL

When ART 180 and Legal Aid Justice Center agreed to transform the project into a joint program, they first created a logic model. This became the guide and barometer through which we made strategic decisions, re-aligned ourselves when we veered off course, and evaluated our success.



Our creative work is not just art, it is a platform, stage, classroom, and organizing hub. The art is the vehicle through which young people tell their stories and share their vision of a world without youth incarceration. It is then transformed in as many ways as the Performing Statistics team and our partners can dream of in order to connect with or speak to the people making decisions that greatly impact youth and their families. The following is a sample list of creative assets and creative strategies used over the past three years.



# CREATIVE ASSETS



## PRINTMAKING

Our program continues a long tradition of using printmaking as an accessible and powerful tool to express radical thought to large audiences. Using screen printing as the primary method, designs are translated onto a variety of formats, such as posters and t-shirts, and often given away at advocacy events.



## PHOTOGRAPHY

A simple way to express emotion, we use photography to capture both the young people's thoughts and document the process. Both are essential to communicating complex ideas. Photographs are often reproduced with text.



## VIDEO

Video allows our young people to tell more complete stories. Often the story is prompted by a question such as, "What do youth need to stay free?" Video is a highly attractive and flexible media in our modern, fast-paced world. Their videos are transformed into powerful content for exhibitions, online engagement, and augmented reality publications.



## AUDIO

The sound of a young person's voice elevates the humanity often devoid in legal or policy-centered spaces. We transform recorded interviews along with individual and group poems in a variety of ways that elevated the vulnerable and painful realities of incarceration.



## VR FILMMAKING/ NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Using new technologies, like virtual reality, grabs the attention of the youth participant and the viewer. It is important that we continue to push our boundaries of art-making to combine the oldest forms of art-making with the newest.



## CURRICULA, NEWSPAPERS, AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Compiling words and images into audience-specific publications, like a school-based curriculum aligned with state standards of learning and a series of training manuals for law enforcement, is a highly effective way to meet audiences "where they are at." This also provides a platform through which workshops and trainings are structured.





## CREATIVE STRATEGIES



### TRADITIONAL EXHIBITIONS

Traditional exhibitions offer a standardized and expected way for audiences to view the art. Exhibitions are designed to be interactive, not passive, forcing viewers to step out of their comfort zones and physically, mentally and emotionally engage with the stories and experiences. It is important that it is not the only way the art is experienced, but it is often the biggest opportunity to be seen by large groups at once. Our 2018 opening saw 800 people in a single night, the largest exhibition opening attendance in ART 180's history. In addition to ART 180's gallery, the work was displayed at 1708 Gallery in Richmond, Virginia, Piedmont Arts in southwest Virginia, and at the John Marshall House in Richmond, Virginia.



### POP-UP EXHIBITIONS

Pop-up exhibitions are a way to partner with other arts, cultural or advocacy organizations to connect the work of Performing Statistics to their missions. They are often customized and redesigned according to the presenter's needs and the space it occupies. These strategies allow the project to trespass into non-art spaces (universities, government buildings, schools, and beyond). For example, Virginia Commonwealth University hosted a week of programming that addressed mass incarceration for their Common Book program featuring Bryan Stevenson's book *Just Mercy*. We designed and installed a week-long pop-up exhibition throughout the VCU Library that reached tens of thousands of students as well as Bryan Stevenson himself, a particularly poignant moment for the project when members of Youth for RISE met one on one with Mr. Stevenson.



### JUSTICE PARADE FOR YOUTH

Parades are a celebration, an honoring of an idea. Parades are also a spectacle, a way for the public to see or participate in something unexpected and grand. The annual Justice Parade for Youth is all of those things as well as an organizing tactic and an advocacy strategy. The art and statistics are reproduced in highly mobile and accessible ways and t-shirts screen-printed with the teens' artwork are distributed. The parade atmosphere is family friendly and inclusive, and for many is one of the first interactions they have with the project and the issue. Over the years we started the parade at the Virginia General Assembly, at Richmond's City Hall, in front of the Social Services building, or in a park situated in a neighborhood that sees high rates of youth incarceration. Nearly a thousand people have participated in a parade, and we have received the highest amount of media coverage at these events.



### **NON-TRADITIONAL POLICY SPACES**

Performing Statistics is committed to connecting with systems stakeholders, and that sometimes means bringing the art to spaces that are typically void of art. For example, every year Virginia legislators on the House and Senate Finance Committees hold public hearings to discuss the state budget. Since 2016, we have committed to showing up wearing t-shirts displaying artwork, holding custom signs created by youth, and playing audio recordings of poems or testimony created by incarcerated youth. Photography and other visual art often enhances policy reports or is included in larger advocacy packets, ensuring that youth voices are present.



### **WORKSHOPS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AND EDUCATORS**

Some of the most profound organizing work happens in highly targeted workshops where pop-up exhibitions create a classroom in which we discuss the impact of the school-to-prison pipeline. Creating opportunities for police officers, for example, to learn about the impact of trauma and chronic stress on the adolescent brain just before they intimately explore the artwork from our project, builds knowledge and empathy that translates to behavior change. We have trained more than 150 police officers and recruits and more than 50 educators on how the school-to-prison pipeline affects their relationship with youth and impacts the entire community.

# Understanding the Impact

In Spring 2018, RMC Research, led by Chris Dwyer, was selected to: 1) synthesize existing data that had been collected by the program and augment with additional qualitative data to address additional outcomes; and 2) develop an evaluation plan for future replications of Performing Statistics<sup>9</sup>. The following section was mostly drafted by Chris and details the key lessons throughout her process.

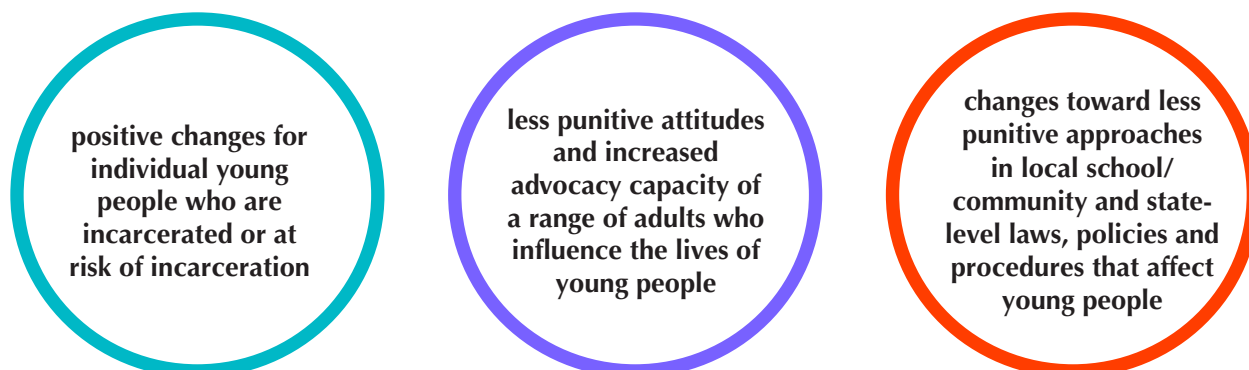
The dynamic and multi-faceted nature of the program posed challenges for designing an evaluation that adequately addressed all features of the innovation and captured a full range of potential outcomes. To do so, we began by gathering descriptions of the program's theory of change (the story of how the innovation was intended to effect the changes that were envisioned), and the essential features or core elements. The core elements are the features that would need to be implemented in a different setting to achieve similar results. Next, we worked with program staff to specify the known and desired program outcomes in ways that could be documented. Finally, we were alerted to characteristics of the context that may affect implementation success and outcomes to understand what factors might be at play in another setting.

Building understanding of the innovation proceeded through several stages: learning about the program through existing materials; surveying program staff and those with knowledge of the program about its core elements; hosting focus groups to explore the survey results and refine the collective understanding of the program; and through approximately 40 interviews, gathering further information about implementation from different stakeholders. One key early lesson revealed that our collective understanding of the theory of change, core elements, and desired outcomes will continue to evolve as the project is replicated.



# THEORY OF CHANGE

Combining collaboratively-produced artwork (i.e., artists and youth working together on topics related to youth experiences) with advocacy strategies (e.g., grassroots activity, community engagement, testimony, targeted training) leads to:



The theory of change helps to distinguish Youth Self-Advocacy Through Art from other interventions with similar features in these important ways:

- **Advocacy for youth voices, not art-making, is the through line.** The program should not be confused with the many programs that simply provide arts experiences for young people. Instead the art-making in Youth Self-Advocacy Through Art is an adult-youth collaboration. Youth voices develop the messages to be conveyed through art; art work is shaped by adult artists with youth engaged in production. There is more emphasis on unified aesthetics of the art products than would be typical in other art-making programs given the purposive and curated use of art products in advocacy activities.
- **Collaboration among different types of organizations** (legal/justice reform advocates, youth serving organizations, arts groups, juvenile justice system, police department, public school system) is an essential feature. This innovation can only achieve its intended outcomes by nurturing working relationships among organizations with varied missions.
- **The program navigates the balance between providing direct service and advocating system changes.** Advocates for system change who are necessarily critical of the system walk a fine line because their access to youth at risk depends to some extent on maintaining relationships within current systems.
- **Program impacts are grounded more in advocacy-related outcomes than outcomes associated with traditional youth-leadership innovations.** These include development of youth self-advocacy skills, increased efficacy of the array of adults who are in a position to affect youth's lives directly (e.g., those in the juvenile justice system, teachers, police), and system changes toward reform of the juvenile justice system (e.g., changes in laws toward less punitive approaches).

## CORE ELEMENTS

Views of the essential features of Performing Statistics as an innovation have evolved and will likely continue to do so—especially true of an innovation that works through partnerships to achieve goals. Below is our current understanding of the core elements, that is, what would need to be in place to replicate the innovation in another setting to obtain similar outcomes.

### 1. TARGET PARTICIPANTS

A small group (six to eight) of teens who are incarcerated or who have otherwise become involved with the justice system and are able to participate in an extended and intensive multi-week program of activities (example: 12-15 hours per week over a 10-12 week period). Effectively recruiting the target population requires building trusting relationships with the juvenile court system, diversion programs, and/or juvenile detention centers.

### 2. CURRICULUM

Use of the Performing Statistics curriculum that features higher-order questioning, peer dialogue, critical thinking and problem-solving strategies to: 1) develop self-advocacy skills through helping young people understand and discuss how they have been affected by larger systems; and 2) elicit ideas from young people for stories and messages to be conveyed through jointly produced work.

Focus topics include the experiences of young people with the judicial system, their aspirations and interests, supports they need to be successful, negative school discipline practices, disproportionalities in punishments by race, youth rights, and so forth. Young people's stories, thoughts, and discussions become the basis for guided adult-youth art-making in youth-engaging art forms (e.g., spoken word/poetry, spray painting posters/murals, virtual reality filmmaking, stenciling/screen printing T-shirts), all using relatively low-cost materials.

The art-making has policy targets; it is focused on advocacy products that can be shared broadly (e.g., through exhibits, the annual Juvenile Justice Parade, in police recruit trainings). The art products themselves are professionally guided and curated. Youth contributions are the youth-voiced messages

(e.g., a poem, words on poster, choice of what to feature in a film). As described by Creative Director Mark Strandquist, the role of artists in this program is to scaffold the involvement of young people through the process of art-making rather than teach them skills that they apply independently.

### 3. STAFF

Carefully-selected artists and mentors guide young people through the curriculum in a non-institutional setting where youth have some choice and freedom. Because relationship developing is critical, adult-to-youth ratio is low (close to 1:1) and consistency of staff is vital. Mentors must be credible messengers based on their own lived experience with the judicial system, including having had criminal records and found a positive pathway. The mentor role is a delicate one, engaging youth in highly intentional conversations, and pressing their thinking and forward actions without forcing them.

Artists are highly talented practitioners in art forms that are suited to expression of messages (e.g., poetry, printmaking, film, poster/mural creation, and so forth). A lead artist or artist team oversees a "unified aesthetic," keeping in the forefront the intended use of art products for advocacy purposes. As such the art is the vehicle by which to engage people so "everything must look great" and thereby giving a sense of dignity to the young people involved and the messages they want to convey.

All staff are trained in trauma-informed practices. During the course of the program, core staff work closely together under the direction of a lead artist and program staff to process on a daily basis participants' engagement and reactions and alter activities accordingly.

#### **4. COLLABORATORS**

Partnerships with one or more organizations that have expertise in advocating for youth rights/juvenile justice reform (examples: legal aid organizations, justice campaigns, children's rights organizations) and which likely hold a range of perspectives on advocacy strategies/tactics. Those advocacy partners both guide policy targets toward "win-able goals" and channel messages from youth voices to have the greatest impact on policy reforms and social change. They provide the advocacy platforms (see below) for youth voices to be heard. In addition to advocacy organizations, the program develops relationships with other organizations for the purpose of influencing organizational policies and practices.

#### **5. ARRAY OF ADVOCACY PLATFORMS**

Multiple opportunities for showcasing the advocacy work of youth and for the public to engage with youth, providing an outlet for expression. The goal is "accessible messages in many spaces." Examples: curated exhibits of art work that immerse visitors in youth messages about the school-to-prison pipeline and system injustices; interactive exhibits featured within police recruit training, including a manual for police written by youth; the annual Juvenile Justice Parade celebrating the voices of young people affected by the school-to-prison pipeline; youth testimony before the General Assembly; and magazine-format summaries of youth artwork available for widespread distribution.

#### **6. ONGOING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

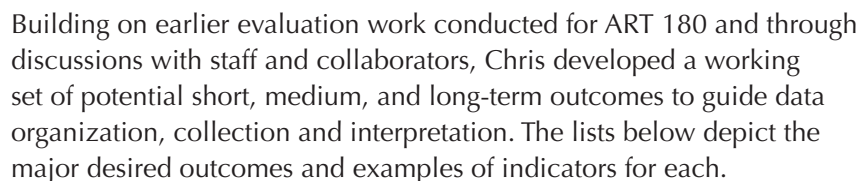
Multiple pathways for youth to continue contact with program staff and partners during and after initial immersion experience as well as a wide range of individualized supports for participants and their families. ART 180 helps to arrange supports such as continued work with a mentor, supervised employment, a coach for the parent, a work experience/internship related to career interests, and intensive behavioral therapy. Also includes connection to advocacy opportunities for youth such as participating in RISE for Youth.

## **CONTEXT**

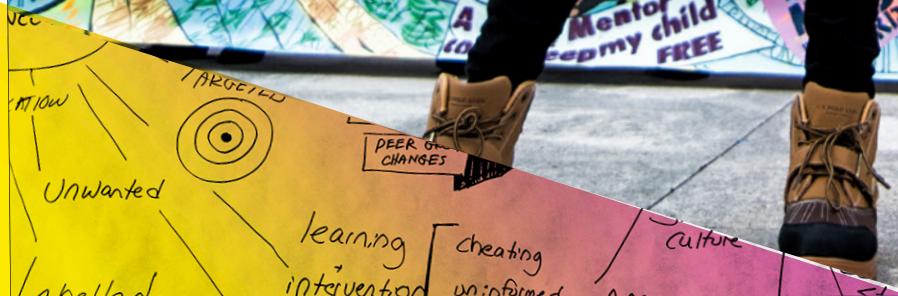
From Chris Dwyer, "One can imagine the potential for successful replication of the six core elements in other communities, assuming variations in the types of partner organizations, the sources of the participants, the artists and art forms, the advocacy platforms, and the specific issues of interest to youth.

However, individuals interviewed noted that some conditions in Richmond have influenced the success of the program at this moment in time. Those include: the unusually high rate of youth incarceration in Virginia along with the related issues of school "push-out" (a high rate of suspensions and expulsions), and disproportionality of discipline and incarceration rates by race; leadership changes in the Department of Juvenile Justice signaling an opening for change; progressive leaders within the juvenile court system and Richmond police department; a legal aid partner organization with a long-term track record in working on children's issues; legislators in the General Assembly interested in juvenile justice reform; and an arts-friendly community that embraces a range of art forms."











## IMPACT ON YOUTH

From 2016-2018, Performing Statistics served 21 youth from the Richmond Juvenile Detention Center's Post-Dispositional Program (RJDC Post-D). The RJDC Post-D Program is a long term (up to six months) program for young people ages 14 – 17 who have committed an offense, which if committed by an adult, would be punishable by confinement but who have never been convicted of a violent felony. Community-based disposition is an alternative to commitment to the Department of Juvenile Justice. While in detention, youth and their families receive counseling, educational services, and skill development.

### YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS

The juvenile court judges who review progress on a monthly basis stress that youth who find themselves in detention are in a somewhat fragile state. They are not eager to speak freely, for example, and reluctant to offer more than a few words to describe what and how they are doing. Many are not willing to participate fully in the programs available to them: *"they dabble and may simply select to do nothing."* Another judge noted that, *"these kids can be tough nuts to crack ... they don't just open up so you need to gain their interest and trust."*

One of the most experienced teaching artists corroborated the challenges young people are facing, saying that *"these kids have experienced all parts of 'push out'—humiliation, shame, uneasiness with peers,"* noting that they have much on the line as they open themselves up to creative expression.

The judges place a high premium on youth's willingness to stick with an activity (*"if a kid is willing to continue in a program, it had to be great because they typically don't follow through"*). One judge described how young people she sees are easily defeated, upset by minor setbacks because they feel disappointments very intensely, hence continuing to do something even when it isn't going perfectly is a sign of growth. The judges look for small indications of progress such as a young person who will make eye contact and smile during a court update meeting, or describe what they are doing, showing they are proud of themselves. One judge noted that parents exhibit the same types of behaviors when students are making progress.

Of the 21 young people served in three years:

- 15 served their time in detention and have been able to remain out of trouble.
- 3 continued their interests in advocacy by becoming part of RISE for Youth, a nonpartisan campaign in support of community alternatives to youth incarceration.
- 7 began post-program fellowships that included jobs; one student fully completed a fellowship.
- 6 students have been re-arrested; program notes show that in most of the cases, there are few to no supportive adults or mentors in the teen's life, and they are living in poverty conditions, and/or are in neighborhoods or homes characterized by violence or criminal activity. In a few cases, untreated mental health issues add complications.

Note: Recidivism in these circumstances is not necessarily an appropriate gauge of success and the numbers are both small and include a few who have been recently released. However, the patterns suggest a more favorable outcome of staying out of trouble than the 70% recidivism rate for typical juvenile justice detention programs. Both youth court judges as well as the probation officers commented that recidivism is common given the situations young people face when they return to their neighborhoods. They don't expect that any type of intervention during detention would necessarily prevent re-offending and caution not to hold unrealistic expectations of changed behavior.





## YOUTH PROFILE 1

One young man who is now employed by New Virginia Majority, taking courses online, and serving as a RISE youth leader had completed the program two years previously, immediately became involved with RISE, and hasn't been in trouble since release. He was sent to detention at age 15 and had witnessed firsthand the effects of incarceration within his own family. At first, he did not want to be part of the ART 180 program, preferring to stay at the detention center and play video games, but after a few days working on art projects, he was hooked, surprising himself that he could create art work through spray painting (*"different artists convince you that you can do it ...they made me look like DaVinci"*).

For him, ART 180 was a "welcoming place" where the staff members were willing to help with anything he needed from food to bus passes. The features of Performing Statistics that were essential for him were the sense of welcome and safety (snacks available, freedom to play your own music, WIFI), the small number of students, and people who were relatable and comfortable to be around. He elaborated on relationships:

*"It's important to have people you can relate to. Gina has been through what I've been through. She would pick up on it if something was going wrong with me and we would sit and talk about it. The staff don't discriminate, and they never say anything disrespectful. They aren't afraid of you because you've been in prison. Kate [teaching artist] is such a happy person. She ignored that we were incarcerated and treated us like her sons."*

He credits ART 180 with the path he is now taking which includes seeking alternatives for youth, lobbying in the legislature, and advocating through activism: *"Without ART 180 I wouldn't be connected the way I am. I learned how to carry myself and speak in front of crowds."* One of the teaching artists who worked with him described the impact: *"He jumped off a cliff of intergenerational trauma to try to believe in us and himself."*



## YOUTH PROFILE 2

The second young man also began the program two summers previously and returned to be a mentor and work with a high school teacher on curriculum activities. He completed a follow-up ART 180 fellowship, working with a landscape company which led to a job he now holds along with several others while also taking online courses. He has kept all the art work he created while in the program. He has been an advocate and spokesperson for justice for at risk youth: *"People need to stand up for themselves at the end of the day."*

He was enthusiastic about participating in the program from the beginning, motivated by the prospect of getting a job through a fellowship after successful completion. Most memorable to him was *"everybody putting their own problems aside to do epic work."* He says when he came back to the program two years later, it was even better.

He credits the program with helping him get used to things outside his comfort zone; for example, he used to stutter but learned through practice to calm his nerves, slow down and breathe, stop and think before talking. He asked the program to give him public speaking opportunities which even led to an invitation from a Senator to speak in Washington DC at a meeting about incarcerated youth.

Most important to him is the freedom that comes from having a job and making his own way (*"which I'll have if I keep my head on straight"*). For him, the most important aspect of Performing Statistics was people who were credible who knew what you have been through and can keep *"an open mind about kids."* His experience in working as a partner to a high school teacher taught him that people can really listen (*"it motivated me to want to encourage other kids"*).



# ADULT PERSPECTIVES ON YOUTH EXPERIENCES

Most of the stakeholders we interviewed, especially those working in the juvenile justice system, provided examples of direct experiences with youth that convinced them of the value of the Performing Statistics experience for youth development. Adult stakeholders in the justice system include administrators, probation officers, educators and staff of the detention facility, and judges in the juvenile court system.

## POSITIVE CHANGES IN ATTITUDES

Several stakeholders working directly with young people who are currently incarcerated described the value of arts for helping youth express their ideas and emotions. From a mentor: *"Kids at this age are all bottled up—art and music are keys to self-expression."* The same adult credited the program provided opportunities for self-expression with breaking down social isolation, thereby supporting protective factors.

*"This is an opportunity for kids to engage with a valuable activity. I believe in using art as a means for self-expression. I'm predisposed to value what might be seen by some as politically charged art work."*

- JUDGE

Another juvenile justice professional described success in helping young people develop pro-social skills by building motivation, noting how young people in the program become fully engaged in positive activities (*"ART 180 brings the child out of the kid"*). We heard similar comments from other stakeholders working in the juvenile justice system, supporting the importance of youth having arts experiences before being placed in work experiences (which is more often the default experience).

*"It gives me chills to see how the teens trust them [ART 180 staff]."*

- TEACHING ARTIST

Individuals in the justice system close to the young people who have participated in the program noted the positive feedback students received from visitors to the exhibit and the pride that they felt

from reactions to their work. One judge described the pride of a student who brought a piece of art created in ART 180 to display in the courtroom.

*"ART 180 is so useful as an outlet because kids are not used to having time and space to reflect. They have generally not had the chance to sit with adults and talk and share. This population has often been resistant to talk therapy--working on art projects can provide that therapeutic space."*

- JUDGE

A justice department official observed the significance of the safety and trust created in the ART 180 environment, noting that young people know the *"staff have their back."* He added, *"young people know they are seen and heard and can be themselves."* He also noted the unique value of providing nonverbal tools for young people to express themselves.

*"When we really talk about our individual situations, they relate to each other in a new way and have empathy because they are from similar backgrounds. For example, they talk about the fear they had the first day when getting locked up. They are proud teenage boys and can't express that they are scared. But now that's a sentiment they have shared. The experience allowed them to communicate and be vulnerable."*

- TEACHING ARTIST



## POSITIVE CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR

We heard during the interviews about the visible changes in behavior on the part of young people while engaged in Performing Statistics activities, with many noting the persistence and extended attention to tasks when fully absorbed with arts production. Chris also observed firsthand the consistent attention young people paid to mentors and artists and to their peers during an hour-plus dialogue about their aspirations and the types of supports they would need to encourage those hopes.

*“Counselors describe the young people as much calmer and note they have developed coping mechanisms. Because of the small number in a group, ART 180 allows a lot of exposure to the issues associated with the school-to-prison pipeline. They’re being asked questions. They can share what they think.”*

- COURT OFFICIAL

The juvenile court judges who evaluate the behavior of students on a monthly basis through in-person meetings with students and parents as well as reports on behavior described the ability of young people to stick with a program as a measure of success.

*“I am thoroughly pleased with the program. They have created a safe space and the kids have meaningful interactions. The kids don’t feel like they are being preached to or used in the program. The intensity of interaction builds long-term relationships with the program and staff.”*

*(During the interview, a former participant who had just been released from jail visited the ART 180 program with a family member—his requested first stop after release from detention.)*

- DETENTION OFFICIAL

*“Participation continues. I wouldn’t expect more of any intervention.”*

- A JUDGE



## PROGRESS TOWARD SELF-ADVOCACY

Several stakeholders described how they have gained insights from their contacts with Performing Statistics about how young people learn to advocate for their own interests and why self-advocacy is so important for the population served by ART 180. One youth worker described seeing how self-advocacy develops through the relationships built with the positive adult role models young people encounter through Youth Self-Advocacy.

*“Young people have been able to see the impact of their work on other people and see themselves as making change.”*

A juvenile justice professional described how she has come to understand that young people who have “touched” the juvenile justice system must develop an understanding of larger systems to avoid blaming themselves and move forward with their lives:

*“Kids who have become part of the judicial system need to have an advanced understanding beyond their years...they won’t get that understanding in any other place until much later. There is great value in understanding system issues during ART 180 rather than by spending a long time in jail.”*

*“They see that many people are actually listening to them and their views.”*

Stakeholders working in the juvenile justice system shared observations about seeing young people develop awareness of the power of their own voices through participation in the annual Juvenile Justice Parade and seeing the reaction to the exhibits.

*“We want them to fall in love with using their own voice...that’s what matters most.”*

## SELF-REPORTED YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

During the initial program year, an evaluator designed a self-report survey of youth in the program who rated themselves on sets of indicators (between 4-8 behavioral statements) associated with artistic expression, critical thinking, self-esteem, sense of belonging, self-identity, self-efficacy, positive relationships, and community engagement.

Strongly agree and agree ratings for indicators were compiled across all students to obtain a summary score for each of the major constructs. During the first year of the program, ratings for the constructs ranged from 87% agreement (community engagement) to 96% agreement (artistic expression and sense of belonging). Those overall high ratings were corroborated by the assessments of teaching artists and were generally higher than ratings given by youth in other community programs. Similar results were replicated with the most recent cohort (2018) using the same indicators as the original survey. In this case, ratings for strongly agree and agree ranged from 74% agreement (community engagement) to 98% (sense of belonging).

Behaviors associated with the most positive ratings (>95%) include behaviors associated with **artistic expression, self esteem, sense of belonging, and self identity.**

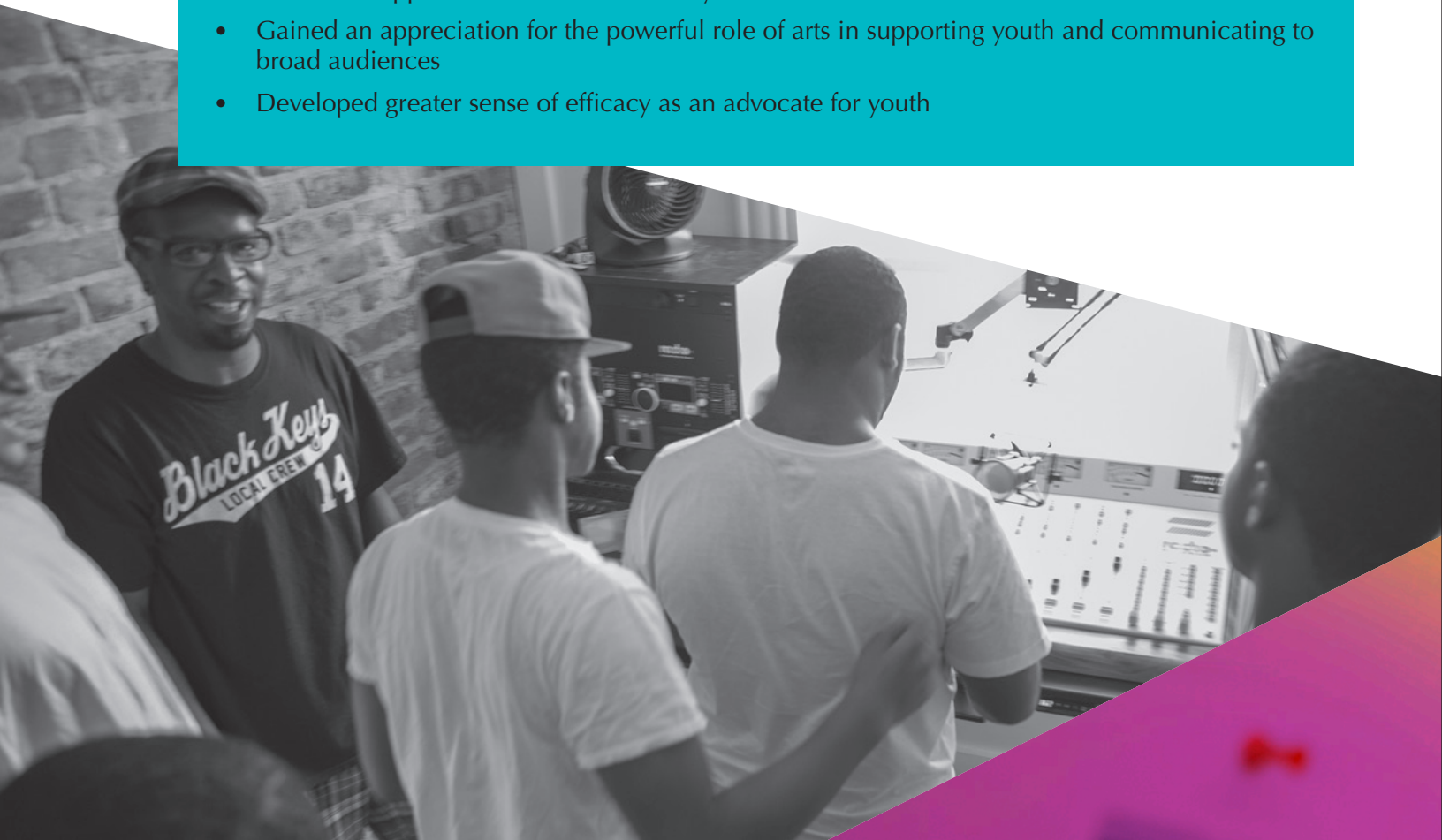
## IMPACT ON ADULTS

When adults who work directly with and on behalf of young people (e.g., legal advocates, juvenile justice professionals, teachers) gain knowledge, clarify their perspectives, and/or change their beliefs about the roots of problems and effective solutions, the potential for them to become more effective in their roles is enhanced. To assess the degree to which Youth Self-Advocacy has affected adults' understanding and attitudes, we interviewed community/organizational stakeholders who are in a position to observe and report attitude and behavior shifts in themselves, their colleagues, and those whom they supervise; reviewed the pre/post surveys and focus group results from police who participated in training (outlined later in this report); and interviewed educators who worked directly with young people in the program to develop curriculum units for use in the public schools.

The adults who engage directly or indirectly with the Youth Self-Advocacy Through Art program report a range of influences on their understanding and attitudes related to incarcerated youth and youth at risk for incarceration. Stakeholders described changes in their own capacities in the five broad areas listed below. We included a separate section below about public school teachers' self-reported changes; in the summer 2018 ART 180 launched a pilot effort to work with five middle and high school teachers on units to try out in their classes.

### ADULTS' SELF-REPORTED CHANGES

- Gained a deeper understanding of the complexity of issues associated with youth incarceration
- Increased empathy and concern for youth at risk
- Gained an appreciation for the value of youth voice
- Gained an appreciation for the powerful role of arts in supporting youth and communicating to broad audiences
- Developed greater sense of efficacy as an advocate for youth





## DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMPLEXITY OF ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH YOUTH INCARCERATION

Stakeholders spoke to the program's effect on their own understanding of the issues that affect incarceration as well as their observations of the insights gained by others. Stakeholders credited engagement with ART 180 staff and the power of the messages in the art products with expanding their views.

*"I learned more about the web of issues that lead to injustice. It's more complicated than I realized especially related to racial disproportionalities. I learned how easy it is for people to buy into the system and how hard it is to dismantle the system."*

- EXPERIENCED LEGAL ADVOCATE

*"They educated me...thinking about the problem which I hadn't done before. These kids aren't throwaways. We need different ways of problem solving and different futures but we can't write them off."*

- TEACHING ARTIST

## INCREASED EMPATHY AND CONCERN FOR YOUTH AT RISK

Contact with youth participants and the messages in their art work has affected stakeholders personally by deepening their concerns for young people at risk. Stakeholders report noting the same effect on the broader community.

*"ART 180 has opened up a door of awareness that wasn't there before. It's in your face and impactful. Exhibits start conversations. Sometimes you need to remove the intellect and go right to empathy. ART 180 sticks with people. You get a sense of what kids' lives really are. ART 180 facilitates perspective-taking and I've seen the echoes through probation officers."*

- JUVENILE JUSTICE PROFESSIONAL

*"Teachers easily forget that to reach curriculum outcomes, you need to build relationships."*

- TEACHING ARTIST

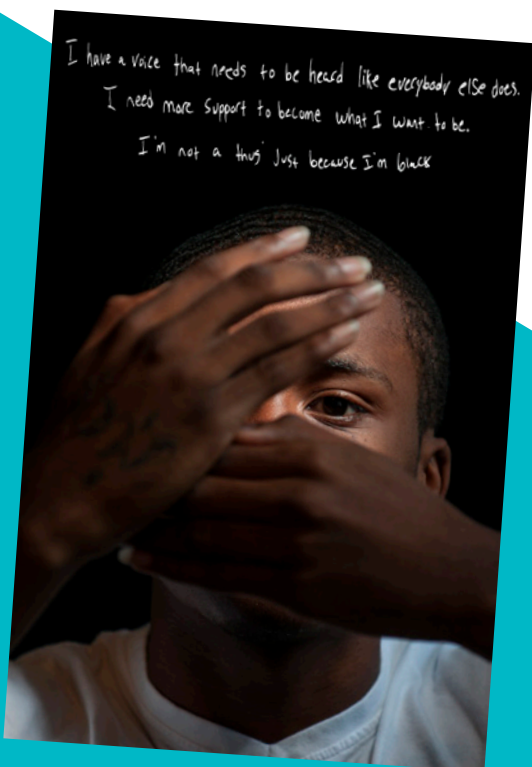
## APPRECIATION FOR THE VALUE OF YOUTH VOICE

Almost all stakeholders described insights about youth development that they had gained or renewed as a result of connection to Youth Self-Advocacy. Several comments were about the authority and authenticity of youth perspectives, embodied in the phrase *“kids know what they need [to be successful].”*

A number of comments focused on the appreciation for maintaining the integrity/authenticity of student voice. One legal advocate described how her connection to the program reminded her to “check myself” and continue to question her own youth-centeredness: *“I need to stay honest in my work and give opportunity to youth in conversation.”* Another described the challenge to adults: *“There’s always a tension between leading students and being student directed so we all need to ask questions but not give answers. It is a very nuanced practice.”*

***“Kids need to be their own advocates because sometimes institutions are not doing their jobs and don’t have young people’s interests at heart.”***

- TEACHER



## APPRECIATION FOR THE POWERFUL ROLE OF ARTS IN SUPPORTING YOUTH AND COMMUNICATING TO BROAD AUDIENCES

Through contact with Youth Self-Advocacy, stakeholders have gained respect for the potential of using art to open up access to difficult issues for all types of people, and thereby begin important conversations.

***“Art is an essential ingredient in social justice work because it can affirm marginalized people. Art takes on burning issues in inclusive ways.”***

- HIGHER EDUCATION LEADER

***“Art is the vessel for discussion about re-imagining a fair and just world.”***

- TEACHING ARTIST

## GREATER SENSE OF EFFICACY AS AN ADVOCATE FOR YOUTH.

Stakeholders frequently made connections between the experiences gained through contact with Youth Self-Advocacy and their own improved abilities to be advocates for youth at risk. The experiences and perspectives that young people document in art work provide vivid examples that illustrate the points advocates seek to make about juvenile justice reform, they recognize the power that adds to their messages, and they credit Performing Statistics with that enhanced ability.

***“Kids need to know that teachers understand their lives. To be credible in conversations, you need to share that you’ve been there.”***

- TEACHER



### **CASE STUDY: WORKING WITH MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS**

In a new initiative started Summer 2018, Performing Statistics worked with five local middle and high school teachers who received stipends to work directly with young people in the program to develop materials for application in their classrooms. Teachers applied to participate and were matched with one of the young people to prepare units that, once piloted, would be shared with other teachers. Several of the teachers had known about the ART 180 work, were familiar with issues of youth incarceration, and even had used some aspects of the curriculum unit developed by Virginia Commonwealth University professors and posted on the Performing Statistics website. Teachers were motivated to develop some activities that were less teacher-directed that they could integrate with their lessons and learning goals.

Performing Statistics student partners varied in how much they “took charge” of the joint work, some promoting ideas they had already thought about and others more reticent, letting the teachers guide the planning. One teacher encouraged dialogue by asking her student partner *“What things would you want kids to know that aren’t obvious to others?”*

When we interviewed teachers in the fall, they had been back in classrooms for two months and all were able to describe how the summer experience had already affected their thinking about building relationships with their students.

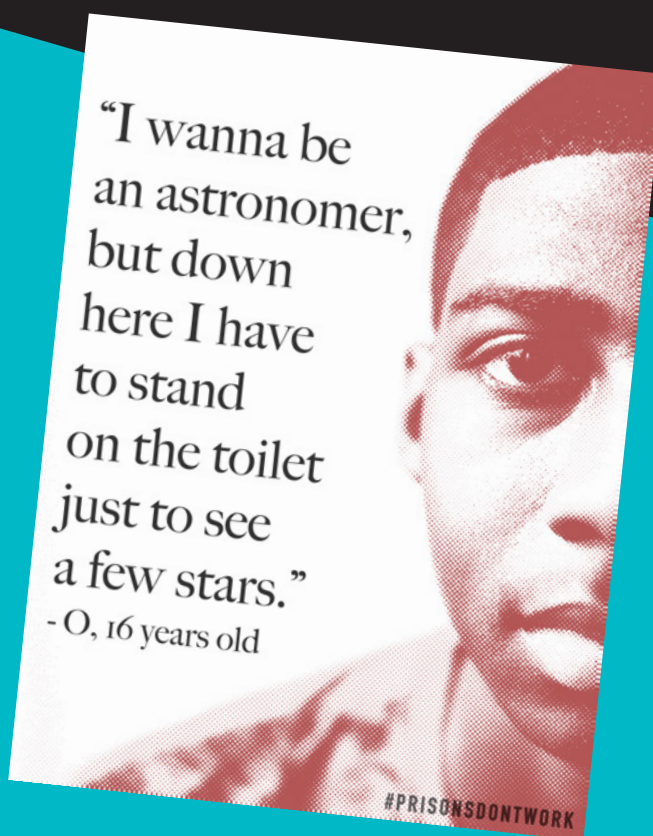
Examples of plans that found their way into classrooms in the fall: a group discussion of the American dream and who gets to have it and who doesn’t; creating “new” monuments (silhouettes of students) to superimpose on a panorama of Richmond’s Monument Avenue Civil War-focused statues; activities to get to know students better (e.g., share a window on your views, what you like/dislike, what stresses you, when you feel safe); classroom discussions with students about the school-to-prison pipeline, including repercussions of behaviors, how to stay out of suspension, and the potential longer consequences of disruptive behavior; and discussions about students’ knowledge/experience with people who have been incarcerated and creation of animations to tell about experiences.



Teachers most often described the effects of the experience in terms of what they had learned about building relationships with students:

- One teacher was encouraged to share the story of a relative who served jail time and died of a drug overdose as a way of communicating to her students that she understands their lives.
- A middle school teacher reflected on her posture toward her students and realized that by not forming positive relationships with students, she was actually contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline. Her pre-service education encouraged teachers in urban schools to use strict discipline—which had not worked for her. She described a fear of getting close to students and losing control. As a result of the summer experience, she decided to become friendlier to students and accept some types of behavior as typical of the age group rather than treating it as a matter for discipline. She now screens her own reactions to behavior, asking herself, “What am I really looking for?” The results are already paying off in a more relaxed classroom without power struggles.
- One teacher reflected on teachers’ lack of ability to modify their behaviors by getting caught up in cyclical practices without enough discussion of alternative strategies.
- When students talked about incarceration, the conversations were emotional. They saw it was valid to have an honest conversation and realize they had student allies. Students who had experience with incarceration felt empowered to tell the truth.

The teachers who introduced conversations about the school-to-prison pipeline and youth incarceration found that students had little understanding of the larger picture. For example, while they were keenly aware of the likely suspensions resulting from being in a school fight, they did not connect such events to the potential longer-term consequences of a pattern of suspensions and expulsions. Few students understood the disproportionalities in incarceration by race.









## IMPACT ON PUBLIC PERSPECTIVES

Important system changes do not happen without changes in public will based on information and experience. ART 180 exhibits that give voice to youth perspectives on incarceration have contributed to building public awareness; over three years, thousands of individuals statewide have viewed one of the exhibits. When legislation and new allocation of resources is part of the picture, broad public support is needed. As both advocates and legislators noted, pressures for change from grassroots constituents is what makes a difference to legislators. They also noted that people are more politically engaged and there is a broader public response to issues related to juvenile justice reforms.

From the outset of the initiative, immersive art exhibits that travel to various sites around the state have been a central part of creating purpose for young people in the summer program and promoting advocacy messages to targeted visitors and the broader public. The exhibits are carefully curated by lead artists and incorporate a growing body of youth art work, e.g., posters, audio experiences, information about the statistics related to youth incarceration, films and photographs, and installations such as a virtual reality prison cell and a prison visitor room. Exhibits include an opportunity for visitors to provide written reactions about their experiences.

### HOSTED EXHIBITIONS

The exhibits have been hosted by a wide range of entities over the past four years: art galleries, museums, public spaces (e.g., SunTrust building near the state legislature), youth facilities, schools, conferences, historic homes, and so forth.

We were able to interview a sample of exhibit hosts from different types of sites about responses to the exhibit and its messages offered by members of the public.

- In 10 weeks at the **John Marshall House**, approximately 1,000 visitors viewed the Performing Statistics exhibit as part of their tours of the historic house. Visitors were mostly tourists and those interested in John Marshall and the U.S. legal system along with specially scheduled groups such as clerks for judges, high school and college students, legislative staff. Preservation Virginia which manages the site was eager to have the exhibit in a new gallery to set the tone for future exhibits in the space, presenting “a call to action for an informed citizenry” on topics related to the legal system: *“ART 180 was exactly what we wanted to have in the gallery space.”*
- The **Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance** has presented the exhibit at several annual conferences, observing the exhibit’s flexibility in adapting to very different settings. The Alliance is committed to helping its members understand the relationship between sexual violence and the work to end the school-to-prison pipeline. The staff gave high marks to the work of Performing Statistics and the exhibit for creating language and themes that are helping shape a larger movement to reform juvenile justice practices and policies by aligning different interests.
- **1708 Gallery** which presents contemporary art provided space during the summer 2015 to convene various community groups and subsequently has hosted art exhibits and followed the trajectory of the project. The gallery director sees the implementation of Performing Statistics as a model for how to catalyze community collaborations for a variety of social justice purposes and a model for thinking about how art and artists can be responsibly engaged.



- **Teens with a Purpose (TWP)** in Norfolk showcased the exhibit at two annual festivals and presented the exhibit beyond the festival. Placement was at a public housing project where approximately 1,000 people saw the exhibit and participated in short related workshops. The experience inspired TWP (*"you literally see someone's reality"*) to travel with young people to the legislature for lobbying day. TWP has also adopted the practice of including statistics related to incarceration in their work which has helped adults pause and reflect on their judgments.

All exhibit hosts were enthused about what visitors learned from the exhibit and their responses to the experience. Even though the host sites and purposes varied greatly, the observations of hosts follow similar patterns:

- The aesthetics of the art work and the interactive approach kept the attention of many different types of visitors.
- The power of the exhibit is the combination of emotional vulnerability with factual information; the combination moves people to action as they feel more responsible within their roles.
- For the many visitors who had not been previously exposed to juvenile incarceration issues, most resonate with the statistics presented about rates of suspension, expulsion, incarceration, and recidivism.
- For visitors who have had close ties to the detention system through family members, the experience was often emotional and even painful although they were very glad to have the exhibit shown.
- For young people, they saw people in the pictures who looked like them doing something powerful. Youth see that people are focused on them and care about them.
- For advocates, the exhibit is a reminder of how important it is to listen to youth voices, to ask them directly about what they need to succeed, and recognize how effective art can be as a tool for conveying young people's thoughts.
- For hosts and selected visitors, the exhibit has served as a catalyst for creating partnerships to solve other community issues.
- Visitors were immediately "pushed into" conversations about juvenile justice; this affects change in a way that is not often the case either with art about social justice or social practice. The technique of asking visitors for a response or a pledge to action helps visitors visualize themselves as part of a larger movement.
- Bottomline for all types of visitors: *"Young artists are credible messengers."*



### REACTIONS FROM “SYSTEM” VISITORS

Most of the stakeholders working in the juvenile justice system who were interviewed had also visited the exhibit. We were interested in their perspectives on the messages conveyed by the exhibit that could be viewed as critical of the system of which they are a part. In fact, all had positive comments about the way youth perspectives on their incarceration experiences were given voice but several also wished that the public would also learn about the opportunities that young people are offered. Individuals commented on:

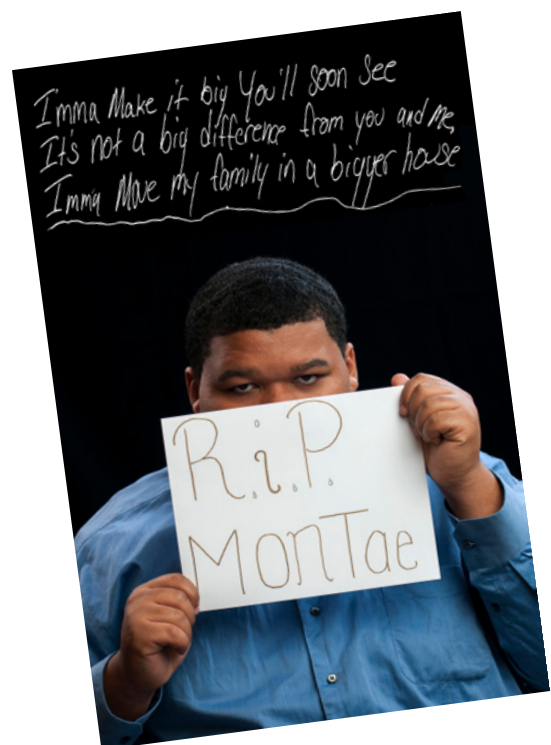
- the power of the virtual experience of being locked in a cell (*“how the kids feel when the doors close”*)
- the trauma created by detention of a young person for family members
- hearing about what young people missed about their homes and families while in detention, e.g., home cooking, their siblings (*“sometimes we only hear about the turbulence of homes”*)
- realizing how young people viewed the adults in the system (*“how they interpret us”*)
- the message of how destructive being removed from family is to the mental and spiritual well-being of young people (*“brings it back to understanding they are still fragile children”*)
- hearing in their own voices what young people believe they need to be successful
- awareness of the potential shown by individual young people who need a chance for redemption (*“What does it say about us as a society that we are willing to throw away a generation?” “Don’t give up on these smart kids.”*)

### REACTIONS FROM THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Visitors to exhibits are offered opportunities to document their reflections on what they learned from the exhibit, including the virtual reality experience of being in a cell, and how it affects their thinking about the direction of justice reform in Virginia. One mechanism for gathering feedback was an “inmate intake” form that first asked visitors to place themselves in the position of an incarcerated youth. (*“Have you ever broken the law but weren’t caught? Have you even gone a month without talking to or hearing from someone you love? What would you miss most if you weren’t able to go home for 6 months? How would you feel if you couldn’t leave your bedroom, eat, or take a shower without permission?”*) They then responded to three open-ended prompts:

- How did the teen’s virtual reality experience impact you?
- What should Virginia do to keep youth free and out of the system?
- Leave a message for the youth who made the art in the exhibit.

We analyzed a sample of 113 response forms drawn from two of the exhibits, about 80% of which acknowledged at least once breaking a law and not being caught. Respondents took the time to provide written responses in almost all cases.



Responding to the impact of the virtual reality experience, almost two-thirds (of 113) wrote a response that expressed empathy for incarcerated teens. Representative examples:

*“It was very sad which allowed me to experience their experience.”*

*“It helped me to gain better perspective an empathy for incriminated youth.”*

*“Shows how trapped these young men and women feel.”*

*“It was harsh and emotionally valuable. I have never been in that position, being so helpless with nowhere else to turn.”*

*“It made me really think about the people that have to experience this. I feel like as a community, state and country there need to be changes made to reform the prison system.”*

A few commented about gaining a better understanding of the experiences of someone they knew who had been incarcerated, *“It’s making me feel for my cousin who has just been incarcerated.”* A few described an “a-ha” moment of understanding the overall system, *“it connected how suspensions and school do impact the future of a child.”*

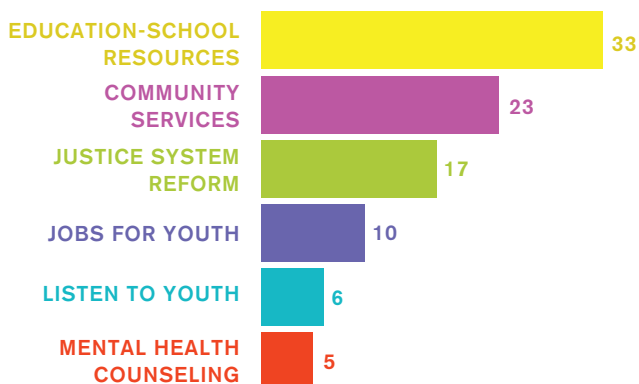
In leaving a message for the youth who made the exhibit, almost 80% (of 113) took the time to compose a message that in some way showed encouragement for young people and conveyed the value they place on their potential. Representative examples:

*“I have been here and I made it and you can too! I was locked up several times when I was young . . . As a teen, I was determined to have a better life so I wrote down my dreams and goals and always worked on them until I became what I wanted to be.”*

*“Your voices are being heard, so continue to communicate your feelings and stories. Your work is powerful and very well done. Thank you for helping others better understand the circumstances that have put you in such an unfair position.”*

The question of what Virginia should do to keep youth free and out of the system prompted the greatest variety of responses. We’ve categorized the responses by the types of suggestions; note that some respondents made suggestions that addressed more than one category, and some wrote only broad general statements. **Only one of the 113 responses suggested that punishment was the appropriate response.**

#### PERCENT NOTING CATEGORY OF RESPONSE





## IMPACT ON LAW, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

The ultimate goal of policy advocates and direct service providers is improvement in education, social service, community, and juvenile justice systems toward ensuring that all youth have positive pathways and equitable opportunities for success. Meaningful change in such systems requires concerted action on many fronts and years of persistent and incremental attainments on the part of many players over time.

Juvenile justice reforms touch many types of system change: legislation and policy that favors less punitive approaches and monitors inequities; allocation/re-allocation of resources to support youth and their families; training and supports for educators to enable them to work effectively with youth at risk; school policies that are framed toward success for all students, including those who have exhibited behavior challenges; contribute positive creation of authentic supports for youth and families that really do improve lives (job and training programs, health, behavioral health, and mental health supports, treatment for addiction); changes in community/neighborhood conditions (infrastructure, safety, recreation); and enhanced training for those who have who are in contact with young people (counselors and social service staff, educators, and police).

While attributing the impact of any one intervention on such “big” system changes is difficult, it is possible to gauge whether and how a given innovation such as Performing Statistics has contributed to system improvements. Evidence to date suggests four ways that Youth Self-Advocacy Through Art has had an influence:

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO SYSTEM CHANGES

- Built grassroots support for system reforms.
- Influenced legislation by affecting the decision of policymakers.
- Strengthened the coalition of advocates for juvenile justice reform.
- Enhanced training of Richmond police officers about youth.



## LEGISLATION

Youth Self-Advocacy Through Art has played an advocacy role in state legislation related to creating alternatives to youth incarceration: the closure of the Beaumont Correctional facility; investment in community-based alternatives; blocking the construction of a new youth prison; increasing the threshold for felonies; and investing in alternatives to in-school discipline, including restorative justice.

*“Centered youth voices made the difference in changes to the law. The authority of our advocates was stronger with the youth and art created by youth.”*

- ADVOCATE

In Spring 2018, the program played a key role in passage of two key bills designed to reduce school suspensions and expulsions. The stakeholders we interviewed highlighted ART 180's work with the two bills which are part of a multi-year campaign to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline by curbing school suspensions of young children and narrowing the time of long-term suspensions for all students.

*“Legislators don't simply want to hear that lives matter. ART 180 breaks through the typical stuff and connected with legislators in a different way.”*

- LEGAL ADVOCATE

The legal director of JustChildren (Legal Aid Justice Center) cited bipartisan sponsorship and passing of the two bills as “proof” of ART 180's effectiveness. She and other advocates and juvenile justice professionals credited Youth Self-Advocacy with bringing the “momentum” of youth voices to the campaign.

*“Real people are brought into the policy discussion.”*

- ADVOCATE

Legislators were influenced by the direct testimony of youth, the opportunity to experience messages about the school-to-prison pipeline and youth incarceration through visiting the exhibit, and hearing from grassroots constituents who had become increasingly aware of the effects of punitive policies on the long-term fate of young people.

*“ART 180 has given young people a toolbox with which they can be advocates and learn to identify with issues and groups bigger than themselves. Their voices are being heard. People are seeing kids in different ways and recognize they are capable of participating in the conversation.”*

- JUSTICE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL



Discussions with legislators who are closely connected to the bills associated with suspensions/expulsions (and related legislation) corroborated the opinions of advocates, underscoring the special contribution that Performing Statistics' youth had on their thinking and passion for reform of the conditions that create the school-to-prison pipeline. In addition to the successful work on documenting and limiting school use of suspension and expulsion, these legislators are engaged with legislation related to definition/consequences for misdemeanors (e.g., disorderly conduct) on school property, reducing the cap on hiring school support personnel, requiring training in recognizing implicit bias and dealing with trauma, and support for afterschool and summer programs.

Legislators spoke to the power of hearing directly from young people about their own experiences with the justice system, *"Usually I'm hearing from an intermediary like a lawyer telling me about a young person's experience."* One felt that members of the General Assembly have a lot of respect for young people who come to advocate and show interest in being involved in the legislative process, *"Most look fondly on affected parties lobbying on their own behalf."*

Two legislators who had viewed the ART 180 exhibit found it powerful in terms of *"personalizing the issues around youth incarceration"* and *"showing how a problem manifests itself in human beings."* One noted that most advocacy during a legislative session is grounded in data while the exhibit "hits home" by translating abstractions into "the person behind the statistic." One made the point that visitors to the exhibit and the general public realized that *"this could be my kid or my neighbor"* and *"nothing is ever as cut and dried when you are up close,"* referring to standard punishments meted out for infractions of rules.

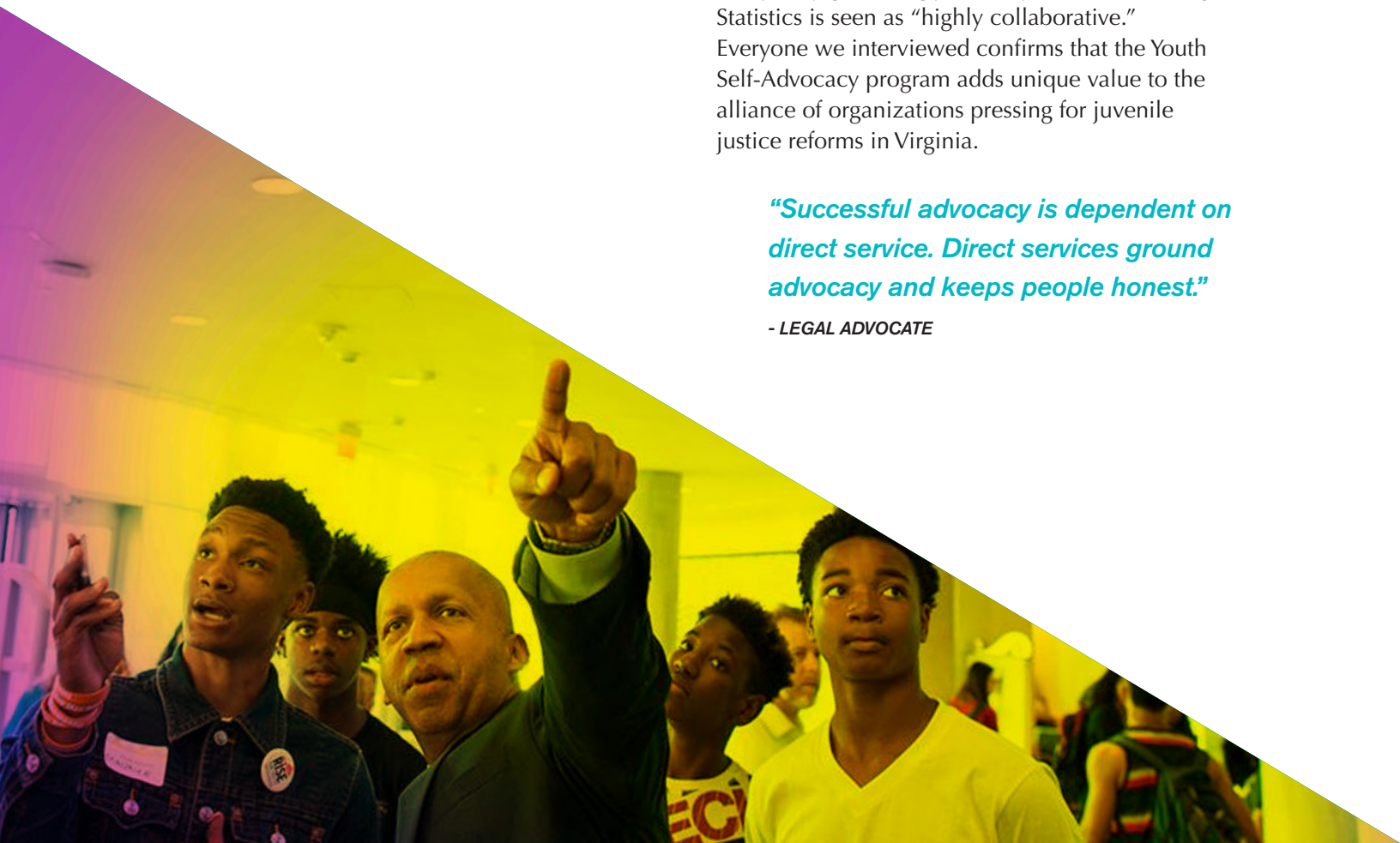
Another mentioned that it is important that the public comes to realize the problems around youth incarceration are systemic and very powerful when the public encourages their legislative representatives to think in a different way.

#### **STRENGTHENED COALITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY.**

In conversations with stakeholders, it became clear that the advocacy-direct service collaboration ART 180 has fostered is a powerful alliance. Stakeholders acknowledge that the collaboration will be key in future efforts to reform the laws and policy governing juvenile justice. Performing Statistics is seen as "highly collaborative." Everyone we interviewed confirms that the Youth Self-Advocacy program adds unique value to the alliance of organizations pressing for juvenile justice reforms in Virginia.

***"Successful advocacy is dependent on direct service. Direct services ground advocacy and keeps people honest."***

**- LEGAL ADVOCATE**







## TRAINING MEMBERS OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Richmond's former Police Chief Alfred Durham (his final day was December 31, 2018) set several priorities when he became chief in 2015, among them safeguarding the most vulnerable members of the community which he saw as young people: *"It's not about them being our future, they are our now."* Chief Durham's visit to an ART 180 exhibit during the program's first year, prompted by an officer on his staff, impressed him immediately. His discussions with young people during a roundtable at the exhibit and their highly negative views of Richmond police, set off a lightbulb idea: *"If I can sit here and learn from these kids, so can my officers."*

At the same time, he was shocked to learn that Virginia was leading the nation in the number of arrests of young people. His own department had already arrested 150 young people that year for disorderly conduct, prompted frequently by the requests of school administrators. A week later, he announced to school administrators that the police would no longer arrest students for disorderly conduct at school. He began a small program for the students (and their parents) who had been in the most trouble to address conflict resolution, management of social media, and so forth.

Chief Durham wanted to give his new recruits a crash course in connecting with youth so they would understand the mission of the department: *"I'm trying to change the culture."* His goals were to improve communication between police and youth, encourage officers to get to know people in neighborhoods on a first name basis, ensure that officers understand what drives today's youth, see officers mentoring young people, and see youth become advocates for police.

He was especially impressed with a booklet that the youth had developed about what they would like police to know and excited that he could use a different type of training to expose his officers to young people's thinking. So began the partnership between the Richmond Police Department and ART 180 to train officers in understanding how to interact with youth—a half-day session that combines information about the effects of trauma, suggestions for defusing tense situations that involve young people, and an immersion in the youth-voice materials created by Performing Statistics.

Chief Durham's view is that his role is to give young people chances and to set that tone for the rest of the department: *"ART 180 is not an opportunity to miss out on given the challenges we face every day, especially given that youth are not getting involved in violent crime. It's a partnership that helps us reduce risk."*

**Results of Training.** Since the pilot effort, the training for police has been evaluated through pre and post surveys, observations by independent reviewers, and follow up interviews and focus groups. In this section, we've synthesized the series of evaluations that have tracked results.

The original pilot training for police cadets was successful in terms of strengthening the partnership with the police department to continue training all members of the department. A summary report of results highlighted that **cadets learned about the issues** (e.g., the cost of incarceration, high recidivism levels, prevalence of mental health needs, and the types of offenses that lead to youth incarceration); gained awareness of **how their own behaviors could change** (e.g., refrain from assumptions that may be biased, using patience and respect when talking with young people); and were impressed with the **power of the exhibit** to explain how incarceration negatively affects young people.

A review of pre/post surveys during the second year of trainings shows some **short-term changes** affected by the training:

- Responses about what keeps kids out of the justice system are similar before and after training, with somewhat more emphasis post-training on the role of parents and community partnerships after the training.
- Responses about **changes in the Department** that would create better relationships with youth are similar before and after training, with somewhat more emphasis post-training on having more options for diversion as well as the need for change in attitude on the part of some police. **About one-third of participants said the training would change how they engage with youth with another 30% saying "maybe."**

Over a third rated the training as extremely useful in performing their duties with only 10% rating the training as not useful. Over 80% would recommend the training to other members of the department.

- When asked about what they might **do differently** in approaching young people, police trainees noted a variety of ways they would try to be less intimidating and open to conversation (e.g., introducing themselves, asking a question about their needs, listening, not touching belt or gun during conversation, showing respect).
- When asked what they might do differently in **de-escalation and interrogation**, police trainees tended to mention they would try to change their tone in interaction (e.g., change my voice, separate individuals from peers, acknowledge how they feel, listen to their side, encourage youth to talk).
- The majority of key messages that police trainees said they were taking from the program were about **how to better relate to youth** (e.g., don't judge, how to address young people, taking the time to understand a juvenile's history) and what youth may need (e.g., people who care, safe outlets to be heard). Only two expressed resistance to the messages e.g., focused on unfair perceptions about the police.
- Different police trainees were affected by different **parts of the training**, often mentioning aspects of the exhibit (e.g., videos of young people, the recreation of the cell, youth voices, books created by youth) and the presentation about effects on families.





To understand what police who have **retained and applied** from the training, ART 180 staff have conducted interviews and focus groups approximately six months after initial training. The transcripts from those discussions echo the short-term outcomes:

- Six months later, there continue to be differences between those who resonated with the training's messages about the effects of trauma and developmental stage on youth behavior and then adjust their interactions accordingly and those who stress that an understanding of youth circumstances cannot excuse troubling behavior.

For most trainees, the messages about having empathy with young people, remembering their developmental age, talking with youth in a way they can understand, and treating them with respect remain on their minds. *"If you can't be empathetic you shouldn't be doing this job"* and *"I started to think about if that was me, how would I want to be treated?"* *"You don't know what somebody's going through until you sit down and talk to them,"* or *"...it really touched on who I was as a juvenile."* Those who empathize with young people recognize that ongoing and frequent interaction with young people is the way to break down the "us and them" mentality that is a barrier. Some mentioned the importance of dealing with young people one-on-one.

Those who resist the training's messages feel that youth need to learn to treat authority with respect, are given too many chances, and know the difference between right and wrong. They believe that young people need to be held accountable regardless of the conditions that might have led them astray. *("We can't look the other way because they are juveniles.")*

Whatever the perspective, the challenging circumstances that surround young people are much on everyone's minds with many providing examples from their interactions of parental neglect, abandonment, or even criminal involvement and wondering about additional resources to support youth and their families. By far, the most common examples offered in support of either an empathetic or a more punitive position are about lack of parental accountability.

Another common example offered in discussion was the curfew dilemma. Even those with a more punitive outlook described their reluctance to arrest a young person for curfew violations. Across the spectrum, arresting young people for curfew violations was offered as an example—of a law that needs to change, of a reason to "look the other way," and as an example of the dilemmas in which officers find themselves caught.





# CHANGES/IMPACT

Impact and changes made as a result of individual and collective efforts of Performing Statistics.

## EDUCATION

Virginia General Assembly passed SB170 limiting suspension for preK-3rd grade to no more than 3 days for most offenses.

Virginia General Assembly passed HB1600 limiting long-term suspension to no more than 45 days.

Curricula co-created by teen participants and teachers reached 300,000 students through the Amplifier Foundation's We the Future campaign.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

More than 150 recruits and police officers have been trained in the impact of trauma and chronic stress on the adolescent brain, youth/police interaction and combating stereotypes of youth and their families using the artwork as a classroom for the training.

A revised Memorandum of Understanding between Richmond Public Schools and Richmond Police Department was adopted (*Note: though our hope is for stronger reforms between schools and police take place, this is a small win for the Richmond community.*)

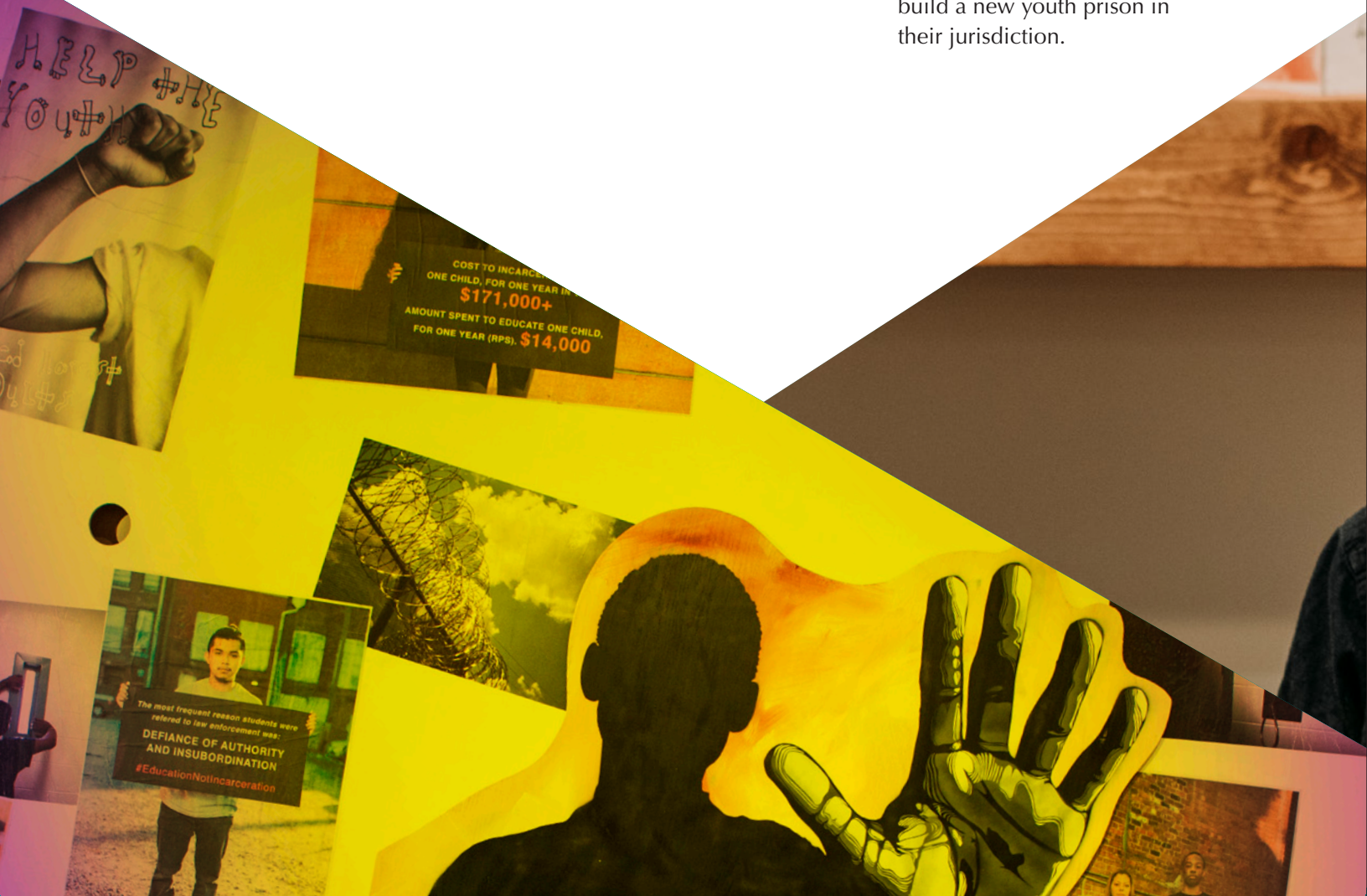
## LEGAL

Beaumont Correctional Facility was closed, one of two remaining juvenile prisons in Virginia.

Savings from the closure of Beaumont were retained and invested into a new continuum of community-based diversion resources.

Joint advocacy with RISE for Youth slowed the progress of a task force that proposed building two new youth prisons.

Chesapeake City Council voted no on a proposal to build a new youth prison in their jurisdiction.







# Conclusion

Reflection by Chris Dwyer

## SUMMARY

Over the past three years (not including the project's initial pilot year), Performing Statistics has been able to provide a small number of incarcerated youth the opportunity to understand and comment on the systems in which they are caught up, express their fears, feelings, and hopes, and experience a positive art-centric environment with caring adults who believe in the power of youth voice. Adults in the juvenile justice system who are in contact with the youth during and after incarceration agree that the program provides them with meaningful encounters with various artistic media, engages them in ways that encourage reflection and persistence, and elicits a sense of pride based on others' reactions to the art work they create together.

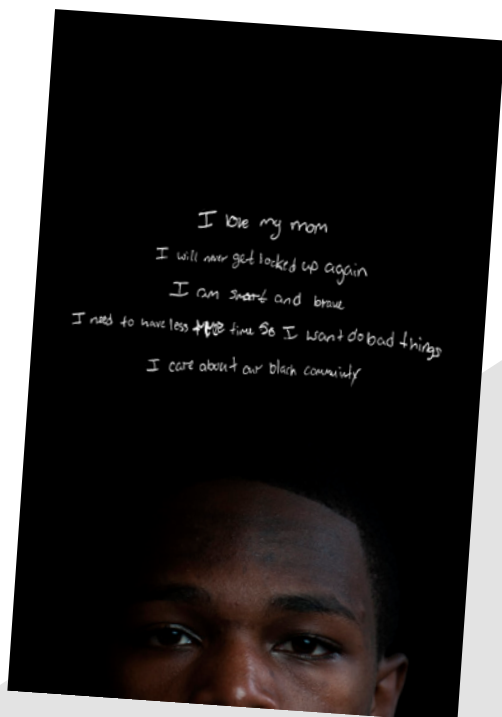
The young people who have participated in the program affirm that participation contributes to a more positive attitude about themselves and their potential, creates a sense of belonging, and facilitates the ability to express their thoughts and feelings, giving them techniques which they can apply in a wide range of circumstances.

The art work that is collectively produced by artists and youth describes the experiences young people have had while incarcerated, shares their reflections on the situations they find themselves in, and gives voice to the hopes they have for their futures and the supports they need to move forward.

Combined with descriptive and statistical information about juvenile incarceration in Virginia, the art work has been featured on different advocacy platforms reaching thousands of members of the general public as well as targeted stakeholders in the juvenile justice system. Visitors to exhibits express empathy with incarcerated young people, see them as full of potential to contribute to the community, and believe that improvements in schooling and community services are the priority reforms needed in Virginia to support youth at risk.

Even those experienced with the juvenile justice system agree that their contact with Performing Statistics has helped them understand more about the complicated set of issues around the school-to-prison pipeline and youth incarceration. They share that their contact with youth voices experienced through art work has increased their empathy and concern for incarcerated youth.

Adults who interact regularly with at risk youth in their roles have taken particular lessons from their contact with Performing Statistics. Most police officers who have been trained by ART 180 recommend the training to other officers. About one-third indicate that the training changes how they will interact with youth. Public school teachers who worked with incarcerated youth have become much more aware of the role that teachers play in the school-to-prison pipeline as well as how the relationships they form with students can be critical supports.





Juvenile justice advocates and key legislators agree that the art work created in the program has played an important role in building broad public support for disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline, including passage of legislation limiting suspensions and expulsions. Legislators were influenced by testimony from youth, the messages in the exhibits, and their constituents who had become aware of the long-term effects of punitive policies on young people and the community at large.

From a core set of activities conducted with small groups of young people, the Performing Statistics staff have built out a variety of well-regarded partnerships in the city of Richmond and throughout the state of Virginia. Those partnerships are influencing change in the wide range of systems that limit the chances of youth at risk, especially youth of color, to move through adolescence on positive trajectories. Perhaps the strongest endorsement of the potential of Performing Statistics to effect long-lasting reforms comes from the statements of leaders in those systems:

***“It’s a partnership that helps us reduce risk.”***

**- POLICE CHIEF**

***“I think very highly of what they do and what they have achieved as a service provider. Giving young people the framework in which they can be advocates is great. It’s important that people see kids as capable of participating in those conversations. The whole idea is great; don’t give up on these smart kids.”***

**- JUSTICE DEPARTMENT LEADER**

***“Youth Self-Advocacy Through Arts’ work has elevated youth voice in the community and state, especially with people who have power such as legislative leaders.”***

**- ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION LEADER**

***“ART 180 helps us to see how a problem manifests itself in terms of human beings. It hits home that there is a person behind the statistic. And here’s the information about what that person needs in order not to be a statistic.”***

**- STATE SENATOR**

***“ART 180 has particular expertise in the way they do work coming from an organizing approach. We need to share youth perspectives whether adults like it or not. We wouldn’t have a women’s movement without women in lead roles. How can we have a youth movement without youth leaders?”***

**- LEADER OF NATIONAL ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION**



## Endnotes

- 1 It is difficult to cite one source for the term radical imagination. Perhaps the most profound history is from Dr. Robin D.G. Kelley's book, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. The work of philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis from the 1960s and the work of Drs. Max Haiven and Alex Khasnabish through The Radical Imagination Project are also worth citing.
- 2 Ferriss, Susan. "Virginia Tops Nation in Sending Students to Cops, Courts: Where Does Your State Rank?" Center for Public Integrity, 19 Feb. 2016, [www.publicintegrity.org/2015/04/10/17089/virginia-tops-nation-sending-students-cops-courts-where-does-your-state-rank](http://www.publicintegrity.org/2015/04/10/17089/virginia-tops-nation-sending-students-cops-courts-where-does-your-state-rank).
- 3 The data were obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), VDOE Fall Membership Reports, and VDOE's safe Schools Information Resource, <https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/pti/>.
- 4 Programs and Services. Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, Data Resource Guide 2017, [www.djj.virginia.gov/pages/about-djj/drg.htm](http://www.djj.virginia.gov/pages/about-djj/drg.htm).
- 5 Data Resource Guide for FY 2017, Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, December 2017.
- 6 The timeline represents key moments and milestones throughout Performing Statistics history, as such recurring events are only listed once. The list is only a fraction of the workshops, speaking engagements, pop-up exhibitions, and other ways the work has toured Virginia and the United States and been seen by hundreds of thousands of people.
- 7 This NEA program was cancelled under the Trump administration.
- 8 Credible messengers refers to those who carry the lived experience of the issue being addressed. In this case, this includes youth and adults who are currently or have been in and out of the juvenile and criminal justice systems.
- 9 Chris uses interchangeable names that all describe this program: Youth Self-Advocacy Through Art, Performing Statistics, and ART 180.

### **ABOUT ART 180**

ART 180 gives young people ages 8-18 living in challenging circumstances the chance to express themselves through art, and to share their stories with others. For 20 years, ART 180 has served Greater Richmond by offering outlets in creative expression for young people and communities that face poverty, the threat of violent crime, substance abuse and other challenges. Over the years, they have served thousands of young people, celebrated their creative expressions through innumerable showcases and events, and immortalized their ideas and aspirations in murals and other forms of public art that brighten communities across Richmond.

[www.art180.org](http://www.art180.org)

### **ABOUT PERFORMING STATISTICS**

Performing Statistics is a cultural organizing project that uses art to model, imagine, and advocate for alternatives to youth incarceration. The project connects youth involved in the juvenile justice system with artists, legal experts, and advocates to create art about their experiences navigating the justice system and their vision for a world without youth incarceration. They were incubated at ART 180, in partnership with Legal Aid Justice Center and RISE for Youth, before going independent in 2019. They are driven by the belief in a world without prisons and work with a variety of organizations and campaigns who are actively working to end youth incarceration.

### **ACCESSING TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

To find out more information about Performing Statistics, ways to access the creative materials, and opportunities to connect, visit the program's website at [www.performingstatistics.org](http://www.performingstatistics.org).

The art created in the program is meant to be used and repurposed in classrooms, community centers, meeting rooms, and other spaces where people are working together to make the world a better place. If you have any questions about the project, contact us at [info@performingstatistics.org](mailto:info@performingstatistics.org)

To find out more information about youth justice issues in Virginia, visit RISE for Youth at [www.riseforyouth.org](http://www.riseforyouth.org). For more information about youth justice issues across the country visit the Youth First Initiative at [www.nokidsinprison.org](http://www.nokidsinprison.org).



**PERFORMING  
STATISTICS**



[www.performingstatistics.org](http://www.performingstatistics.org)