

# Supporting BIPOC unstably housed youth through arts

*By focusing in on BIPOC students that may experience housing instability, the opportunity and access of arts education becomes a strategy to move against systemic injustice that plagues BIPOC students whose families struggle with housing stability, schools that face systemic underfunding, students who could not get their needs met in comprehensive high schools, and communities struggling with poverty.*

## THE NEED

In 2017, Innovation & Performance (IP) partnered with the NW Network of Bi, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse ([NW Network](#)) to examine the overrepresentation of youth of color among homeless and unstably housed young people in King County, WA. IP supported NW Network in analyzing qualitative data gleaned from focus groups with over 100 homeless youth of color. One key insight was related to focus group participants' desire to participate in "typical" adolescent activities - like art or sports - but their search for housing prevented them from participating after school. As the NW Network's [Youth of Color Assessment](#) notes, "Many of these sacrificed activities and opportunities are the same ones young people said often helped them when they're having a hard time".

## OUR APPROACH

IP partnered with Seattle's Office of Arts and Culture (OAC) to explore how the City might support homeless youth through activities to support their creativity while also connecting them to trusted adults. OAC is a key partner in [Creative Advantage](#), a citywide initiative to establish equitable access to arts education for each and every student in Seattle Public Schools.

## THE RESULTS

OAC led the implementation of the Creative Youth Development (CYD) Secondary Arts Project, which brought community teaching artists into two high schools in Seattle Public Schools (SPS) who enroll high numbers of youth experiencing housing instability: South Lake High School and Southeast Interagency Academy. The Secondary Arts Project invests in high quality, culturally responsive arts programs to promote creative learning and educational engagement. Participating students developed stronger interpersonal skills, 21st century skills like communication and collaboration, and were exposed to and practiced concepts of creative workforce development and creative entrepreneurship.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, BIPOC students experiencing housing instability have remained engaged in CYD practices as a way to express themselves around issues of COVID-19 and the social movements against police brutality and Black Lives Matter.

## READ MORE

Creative Youth Development, Arts Strategies for Engaging Unstably Housed and Homeless Youth, Seattle Office of Arts and Culture: [https://www.creativeadvantageseattle.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019\\_9-CYDFieldScan.pdf](https://www.creativeadvantageseattle.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019_9-CYDFieldScan.pdf)

Creative Youth Development, Engaging Students of Color Experiencing Housing Instability in Seattle Public Schools: [https://www.creativeadvantageseattle.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019\\_9-CYDFieldScan.pdf](https://www.creativeadvantageseattle.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019_9-CYDFieldScan.pdf)

## DEPARTMENT

### PARTNER

Office of Arts and Culture

## PROJECT

### DURATION

2018

## IMPACT

Provided a safe space and creative outlet for homeless youth

## KEY DEPARTMENT

### CONTACTS

- Ashram Hasham (OAC)

## FOR MORE

### INFORMATION

### CONTACT

- Tina Walha (IP)

