



*Jump*StartSM
THEATRE

2018
JumpStart Theatre
Research
Executive Summary



JumpStart Theatre students perform in the 2018 showcase in Cincinnati.

Overview and Background

The Educational Theatre Foundation (ETF), in partnership with iTheatrics and Music Theatre International (MTI), initiated the JumpStart Theatre (JST) program in Ohio and Kentucky in 2015. The three-year, scalable, pilot program was designed to build sustainable musical theatre programs where previously there were none.

ETF contracted with the Centers for Research on Creativity (CRoC), based in Los Angeles, to assess the impact of the JumpStart Theatre program on the student, teacher, and school community's growth in social and emotional skills while participating in a middle school musical theatre program.

CRoC followed three schools (Gamble Montessori High School, Holmes Middle School, and Finneytown Middle School) during three academic years (2015-16 through 2017-18) of the regional JST program pilot, plus an additional school (Felicity-Franklin Middle School) for two years, using qualitative assessment (from observations of teachers in the professional development bootcamp sessions of the JST process, at school rehearsals and performances, and teacher and administrator focus groups and student interviews), combined with CRoC's Next Generation Creativity Survey Model (NGCS), which measures creative skills and dispositions across six self-reported and three demonstrated vectors of creativity. [See Chart 1.] The data and conclusions from each of the three years of study, as well as an overall holistic summary, are available [here](#).

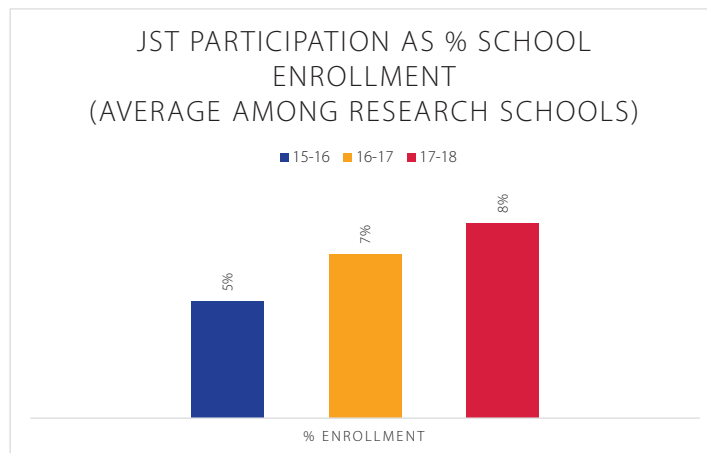
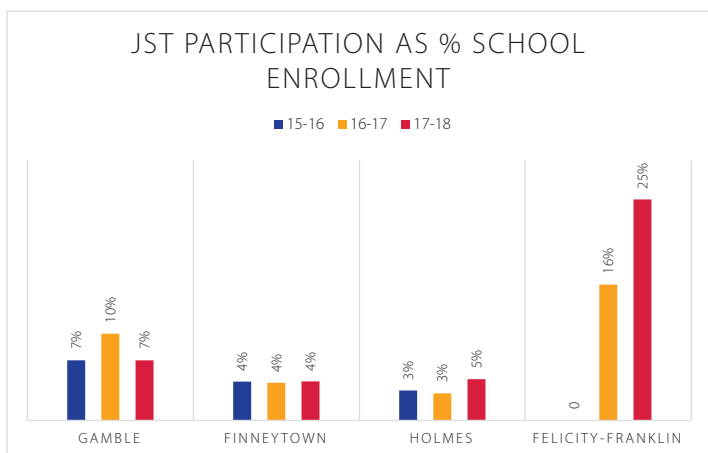
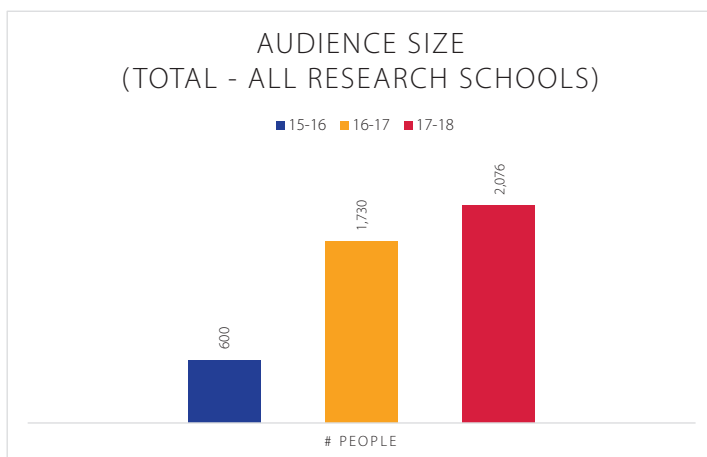
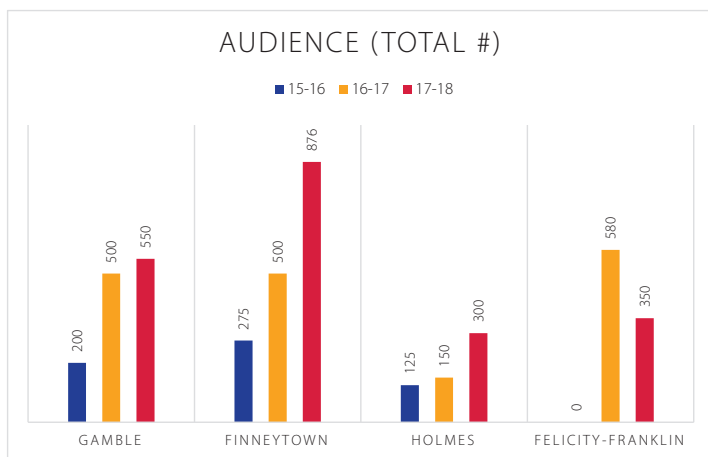
Chart 1

Next Generation Creativity Survey Model Measurement Areas	
Self-Reported Creativity	Demonstrated Creativity
Creative Fluency	Creative Fluency
Originality	Critical Thinking
Collaboration	Creativity in Inventing
Empathy	
Creative Problem-Solving	
Creative Self-Efficacy	

The following charts provide statistics on student involvement in JumpStart Theatre and audience attendance at the research schools over the 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18 school years.

Charts 2-6

Cincinnati JumpStart Theatre Research School Statistics as of December 2018						
School Name	Year	School	Total Enrollment	Audience Attendance	JST Students	JST % of Enrollment
Gamble Montessori High School	2015-2016	<i>Once on This Island JR.</i>	448	200	31	7%
	2016-2017	<i>Annie JR.</i>	410	500	41	10%
	2017-2018	<i>Into the Woods JR.</i>	448	550	31	7%
Finneytown Middle School	2015-2016	<i>Honk! JR.</i>	692	275	31	4%
	2016-2017	<i>Flat Stanley JR.</i>	668	500	29	4%
	2017-2018	<i>Suessical JR.</i>	668	876	30	4%
Holmes Middle School	2015-2016	<i>Annie JR.</i>	753	125	26	3%
	2016-2017	<i>Schoolhouse Rock Live! JR.</i>	736	150	23	3%
	2017-2018	<i>The Little Mermaid JR.</i>	736	300	35	5%
Felicity-Franklin Middle School	2016-2017	<i>Honk! JR.</i>	281	580	44	16%
	2017-2018	<i>The Music Man JR.</i>	271	350	69	25%
*Enrollment data for 2017-18 not available; used same as 2016-17.						
Totals by Year - Research Schools						
Year	Total Enrollment	Audience Attendance	JST Students	JST % of Enrollment		
2015-16	1,893	600	88	5%		
2016-17	2,095	1,730	137	7%		
2017-18	2,123	2,076	165	8%		
History to Date	6,111	4,406	390	N/A		
Average School in 2017-18	531	519	41	8%		



Research Methodology and Focus

Based on extensive research by CRoC personnel, as well as other work on the cognitive neuroscience impact of musical theatre education, CRoC established its research plan for JumpStart Theatre to encompass four focus areas.

1. **Student growth**, particularly in self-efficacy, empathy, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving in JumpStart Theatre
2. **Teacher implementation** of JumpStart Theatre
3. **Teacher support and growth**
4. **Administrative support, growth, and plans for sustainability**

Major Themes

Student Growth

CRoC observed student growth in the following domains (demonstrated consistently throughout the qualitative observations, student reflections, teacher focus groups and surveys, and more).

1. **Ownership and Agency**
CRoC frequently observed students demonstrating high levels of agency, independence, and ownership in all aspects of the creative process; teachers were intentional and designed co-creative learning opportunities, and students independently demonstrated agency and ownership even when unprompted. Examples in the full report include:

"Students were asked to think about and consider the space they would need to cover, how they would get to their exits without blocking their faces or their fellow actors, and each student worked to know their entrances and how to come on stage as their character, not as a student who fears missing their cues."

2. Creative Problem-Solving

The quality and frequency of observations of creative problem-solving behaviors indicate that students demonstrated these skills regularly and independently. Examples include:

"Getting the students to focus on and pay attention to the cues in the music and in the dialogue while also staying focused on keeping in character and interacting with their families or groups is proving difficult. However, one student creatively offered to add levels into their standing so that the students could still watch what was happening while also interacting with their groups."

3. Empathy

JumpStart Theatre students demonstrated empathy for their characters and, at times, for their peers. Examples include:

"With one student, the ability to detect the emotion that should be present, down to feeling angry at outside sources but also finding anger within himself was profound."

One teacher spoke about her students' interaction with a special needs student: "[Many] students won't take the time to make relationships with students like that. But ... when some of the kids see how smart he is, they start to want to become friends with him. And they did that during the show, because they had those opportunities that they would never have had before."



Students at Roberts Academy.

4. Confidence

As one of the most common goals of teachers for their students with the JumpStart Theatre program, CRoC observers and teachers all reported tremendous growth in students' confidence throughout the three-year program. Examples include:

(Of a previously challenging student who has participated in JumpStart Theatre for three years): "He knows he's playing a pivotal part, not only in the show but in the program as well, and it is amazing to see this student, who the teachers will tell you struggled before, grow into such an incredible student."

A student also noted an increase in confidence due to the program:

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



Finnestown students help each other prepare their costumes and hair.

5. Collaboration

The JumpStart Theatre program created space for students to work together productively and to collaborate meaningfully. Examples include:

"Each student struggled with their spacing, but I noticed discussion between the students in each group. They were marking who they were with and finding their own solution to remembering who they were with and who they stood between."

6. Sense of Community

Students fostered an authentic sense of community within their JumpStart Theatre programs. Examples include:

"What's obvious is just the enjoyment and fun and community that the kids appreciate being a part of this whole work, this group, this play. It's more about that than anything, for a lot of them. 'I'm a part of something. I'm a part of a bigger community, I've collaborated.' I thought our student who spoke yesterday hit on that. It helped her make friends, it helped her reach out and feel more comfortable with her peers. And the bus ride [to the Showcase performance] was a big party – they were happy to be together. I think that's something we're always celebrating, whenever we see it. It's a sense of community."

Additionally, students' sense of community was demonstrated when they would regularly congratulate one another and clap after finishing a scene or when motivating their peers to persist and improve.

One particularly useful mechanism to encourage students' sense of community was bringing former JumpStart Theatre students back to assist in set design and mentoring current students. A teacher reflected on this in a focus group:

"There were many times that we brought [the former students] from the high school club that had been a part of the [JumpStart Theatre] production in the past to tutor kids one-on-one in memorization of lines, characterization techniques, ... helping them build confidence."



Students with teacher at Dater High School.

Teacher Growth

1. The JumpStart Theatre Bootcamp teacher training workshops are critical mechanisms to support teachers in implementing the JumpStart Theatre program, with these evident benefits (listed here with a descriptive example of how the benefit was manifested).

- **Building a Sense of Community and Community of Practice:** Teachers were encouraged to share techniques, support one another, and problem-solve together, leveraging their experiences to advance their craft as musical theatre practitioners and teachers.
- **Creating Comfort with Discomfort and Growth:** Some exercises are designed to be a little bit "silly," providing the opportunity to make nonconsequential mistakes and building trust, which was helpful to

teachers and impactful when they reapply the exercise with students. Teachers pointed out that “they all came into the camp feeling uncomfortable and awkward, and they could now empathize with their students when they returned.”

- **Advancing Technical Skills:** Technical skills are demystified with practical, clear, and codified tools and tips that are practiced by all teacher participants and connected to a broader purpose in musical theatre.

- **Cultivating Resourcefulness and Creative Leadership:** Bootcamp exercises empower teachers with creative problem-solving skills and with the knowledge “that even with zero costumes, materials, or stage effects, [they could tell] a story in the purest fashions, through body language and placement.”

- **Emphasizing the Mission to “Tell the Story”:** Strongly ingrained throughout the training, when teachers learn to convey it to students, a lot of pressure is taken off and kids are more able to enjoy the experience. One teacher noted, “For my ELL [English Language Learning] students, if they can tell a story without words, they can feel involved without the added stress of lines in a language unfamiliar to them.”



Teachers attend Bootcamp

2. Teachers experienced growth and learning in terms of:

- **Co-creation (Letting go while providing support):** Even when teachers were knowledgeable about how to solve a problem, they challenged their students to make independent, creative decisions. One example:

“One teacher was phenomenal with the students and encouraging them to discover their character on their own. She asked the girl playing JoJo, ‘Is JoJo supposed to be innocent or serious? What do YOU think?’ The question was not addressed to only the girl playing JoJo either, rather the cast that was present was also asked the question and collaboration was encouraged.”

- **Confidence:** Teachers are recognizing increased confidence in themselves as JumpStart Theatre leaders, especially after multiple years in the program.

“I am feeling a lot more confident. Last year I felt more panicked, like ‘OH MY GOD, is this going to come together? Is this actually going to happen?’ Now, I feel more like, ‘Yeah, this is definitely going to happen.’”

- **Improved Teaching:** Teachers feel as if their skills as teachers have improved, both within the JumpStart Theatre program and in their other classes. Specifically, they are more able to engage their students, push their students’ thinking, and cultivate imaginative and “possibility thinking” orientations by using techniques from the JumpStart Theatre program.

“My biggest takeaway from the three years, and the thing that I’m most appreciative of, is the knowledge that I’ve gained about myself. I have become a better teacher by using what I’ve learned through Jumpstart Theatre. I’m a special ed teacher, and I use tableaux with the kids so that they understand the stories that they’re reading in class. We’ve even gotten up and acted some of them out. That’s the hook that I need with some of my kids.”

“It allowed me to teach students how to make do with what you have. So many of the students I work with are concrete in their thought process that they see what is in front of them, but they cannot see what those things can be.”

Summary of Factors That Enable Teacher and Student Growth

The CRoC research team cited these potentially influential factors (listed here with a descriptive example of how the factor was manifested) that enhanced the depth of student and teacher growth from the JumpStart Theatre experience.

1. **Guided Structure with Room for Creativity:** The Bootcamps provided teachers tools and empowerment to flexibly apply the tools. This framework created confidence in the teachers which translated to creative learning with their students.

2. **Co-creation among Teachers and Students:** Related to Number 1 above, teachers applied a framework but not a prescriptive solution, which led to co-creation with students and cultivated a sense of community as well as personal ownership.
3. **Strong Teaching Teams:** A clear division of responsibility and strong teamwork among teachers was reflected in organized and effective rehearsals and strong student participation.
4. **Feeling like a Part of a Community:** Teachers noted that community extended even beyond their individual school, to other JumpStart Theatre schools, and increased their enjoyment of and confidence in their school-specific role.
5. **Community Buy-in:** Community support and excitement for the JumpStart Theatre program was evident in urban and rural schools alike. One observer noted, "For the community, this show was the happening thing in town. I remember last year, a lot of the members of the community were excited to see how the students had done, and this year was no different. The people of the community all joked about being at school on a Saturday and how excited the kids were to be there."
6. **Integration with the Curriculum:** Student growth is strong and possibly more sustained in schools that have formally integrated JumpStart Theatre into the curriculum (i.e., with an elective class in the school day) or with teachers who integrate elements independently into their teaching. One teacher notes, "I teach a literacy enrichment course, so I get struggling readers and writers. When I have students in my class who are also in the musical theatre program, it enriches their academic pursuits in our class more than I can quantify. When we talk about plot, when we talk about tableaux, telling stories – beginning, middle and end – I can use their theatre experiences, what they're doing in rehearsal, in the curriculum in the classroom."



Roberts students performing Schoolhouse Rock Live! JR.

Administrator Growth

Two areas of growth among school administrators were observed: (1) an acknowledgement of value in the program; and (2) a commitment to build sustainable structures.

Regardless of the level of going-in enthusiasm on the part of administrators, all found value by the end. One principal said, "I didn't get it. Well, guess what? I got it. I had an 'aha' when I saw that special education kid up there. Our kids need this."

Administrator support is key to sustainability of the program, and there was tangible evidence of this dynamic in JumpStart Theatre schools. Some have taken action before the program's conclusion to ensure there is no delay or gap in the program's continuity. An example is the establishment of a drama club in the high school (even including some funding) to ensure that students who participated while in middle school could continue to develop their interest and skills in theatre. Another example is to fund positions to lead the theatre program.

Qualitative Summary

Many of the observed areas of growth appear interrelated and greatly affected by the experiences that teachers had during the Bootcamp and the skills and relationships developed over the course of three years. Thus, JumpStart Theatre appears to be a program of genuine and deep growth for all participants who engage fully and freely — and when teachers model deep engagement and provide the same opportunities to students, the most desirable result occurs: students flourish.



From left to right: Felicity-Franklin Middle school plays Harold Hill in The Music Man JR., Aiken students perform Seussical JR., Gamble Montessori student performing at the JumpStart Theatre Showcase in Cincinnati.

Quantitative Summary

The overall sample for the NGCS survey included 99 students involved in JumpStart Theatre at four schools and 99 students at those same schools who were not involved in JumpStart Theatre (as the control group).

A significant finding from the three-year survey scores was that students who participated in JumpStart Theatre achieved higher NGCS scores than the control group both before and after participating in the program. The researchers concluded, "This result is fascinating, yet largely unsurprising. Students who opt to participate in the JumpStart Theatre program are likely to be attracted to creative expression and the arts out of personal interest."

Comparison of JST Treatment and Control Students' Performance on NGCS Scales						
Scale or Measure	JumpStart Theatre N = 99		Control N = 99			JST Outperforms Control Students
		Gain?		Gain?		
* = demonstrated, scored 0 -2	x = statistically significant gain; o = statistically significant loss				xx = program outperformed control	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post		
Creative Problem-Solving	3.14	3.09	3.1	3.05		xx
Creative Self-Efficacy	3.34	3.31	3.18	3.15		xx
Collaboration	3.28	3.33	3.2	3.11	o	xx
Empathy	3.26	3.21	2.96	2.97		xx
Originality	3.3	3.4	3.18	3.15		xx
Creative Fluency	3.11	3.16	3	3		xx
Creativity in Inventing*	1.1	1.08	0.89	0.84		xx
Critical Thinking*	1.05	1.06	0.94	0.94		xx

Small sample sizes are theorized to have hindered consistent statistically significant gains across schools, students and creativity factors, thus the qualitative data from the extensive observations, interviews, and focus groups provide more robust and consistent evidence of the program's impact.

Overall Summary and Conclusions

To summarize, CRoC's evaluation of the JumpStart Theatre program reveals positive gains and growth for teachers, students, and administrators who participated. Teachers and students have become co-creative collaborators, working together and with confidence to achieve collective success in their musical theatre performances. Students with troubled pasts are transforming into student leaders. The benefits of the program are spilling over into regular classroom teaching and the local community, and school communities are actively pursuing — or planning to pursue — ways to strengthen the JumpStart Theatre program's sustainability.



Aiken students perform Seussical JR.