

The Importance of Art Education for Children
Experiencing Adversity

By

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1. INTRODUCTION

Art has always played an important role in my life. Ever since I could remember I have been passionate about making new things, and sharing new ideas with others. Although having grown up poor, I have always been described as being rich in creativity. Over the last two decades I have moved over fifteen times and attended over a dozen schools. For example, I have attended at least one school for each grade. In the seventh grade I moved three times and attended three different schools all in a single year. Over time, the instability of moving from place to place affected my grades and later caused me to fall behind academically. Lack of support received from my schools and my family pushed me to work harder than everyone else because most of the time I was a step behind.

Although grammar, fractions, history and science have not always been my strong suit, I have always received relatively fair and consistent grades in visual and performing arts. After having spent some time in the same town attending the same school, I was given the chance to focus on catching up to my peers. Following additional time and hard work, my grades began to improve and I was finally able to walk at my high school graduation; I even managed to earn several honors in visual arts. I was later accepted into a college where I pursued a degree in Arts education. To this day, I remain convinced that my passion and skill for the arts is what helped me get to where I am today. Regardless of having been raised poor and homeless, I always received praise for my ability to persevere past the obstacles that stood in my way. This helped me to strive for excellence, especially within the creative world.

Now that I am tasked with writing my undergraduate senior thesis, I intend on taking this opportunity to express the importance of promoting creative programs involving visual and

performing arts. I also intend on addressing the benefits visual and performing art programs offer to children living within the underserved communities located in New York City. I have chosen this particular topic because having been raised homeless and poor created many struggles for me growing up, especially in school. Art has helped me to stay passionate about my education and has helped my grades so that I could attend college. As someone who has experienced adversity growing up, I advocate for the arts because of how I have felt supported by the art community growing up and how others who come from backgrounds of homelessness, poverty, and oppression can also benefit from arts education.

Art has always helped me persevere past adversity. I think it is important for children growing up in environments with higher rates of adversity to learn about the importance of arts education so they too can see the benefits behind creative expression in a school environment. For example, teaching music, dance or art to children who have experienced homelessness, poverty, and other forms of violence or neglect promotes healthier mindsets, which promotes a healthier class environment, which boosts academic performance. Unfortunately over the years arts education has become less appreciated and under recognized within inner city school districts that have needed it the most. Some of these districts remain primarily responsible for serving areas of New York City occupied by students experiencing higher rates of homelessness, poverty, oppression as well as violence. Although studies have proven arts education promotes learning, and New York State laws have required that children between grades K-12 receive arts education, many New York City Board of Education administrators continue to ignore how arts education promotes the learning of all their students. This disregard creates an extreme sense of inequity within a system responsible for the intellectual growth of New York City youth.

Considering the role art has played in my life and others, I have decided to take my new found passion for promoting and developing the arts by discussing the benefits behind arts education programs and children experiencing adversity. In the following sections of my thesis I will be discussing the problems surrounding the increasing rates of youth homelessness and its effects on students' academic performance. I will also be discussing the solutions arts education offers to children facing adverse experiences like homelessness and what New York State has done to support the benefits of arts education programs during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In writing this thesis I am hoping to highlight what's missing from a broken system that is responsible for a significant part of the intellectual growth and development of children being raised in New York City. My aim is to advocate for all the children who remain passionate about their education and futures regardless of the adversities they face. I personally believe it remains everyone's right to receive a quality education that fits their individual needs regardless of the color of their skin, where they sleep, or how much money they or their families make.

2. RATES OF CHILD ADVERSITY IN NYC & EFFECTS OF STUDENT HOMELESSNESS

One of the nation's top research organizations, Child Trends, states "The percentage of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that have been documented in New York States is higher than the national average at a statistically significant level." (*Childtrends.Org*). According to the CDC, "Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years). For example, ACEs can include experiences of homelessness, violence, oppression, as well as growing up in a family with mental health or substance use problems.

Toxic stress from ACEs can cause changes in brain development and affect how the body responds to stress.” (*Cdc.Gov*). When a child experiences stress on an extreme level this causes additional effects in their health as well as their ability to learn effectively. If we look at the effects of homelessness alone, the amount of stress that is experienced in these particular situations has been proven to have profound impacts on more than just a child's academic performance. “Environments with high levels of stress have been proven to also cause increased possibility of developing cognitive disabilities later in life” according to (*Ncbi.Nlm.Nih.Gov*). In conclusion, children who experience extreme adversity may experience difficulties surrounding their academic performance at an even more intense level compared to children who come from stable, supportive homes. For example, children who experience oppression because of their race or religion, or have been homeless may experience harsher effects caused by their adversity than a child who hasn't experienced oppression or homelessness.

The Coalition For The Homeless (CFTH) is just one example of the efforts being made to understand the causes and effects behind the increasing rates of homelessness taking place within the State of New York. Service organizations like CFTH help encourage communities to work against the perpetuation of homelessness. CFTH has designed a study to gather information from cities all around the country so that they can provide people with more information about their communities. CFTH concluded from their findings “That three-quarters of New York citizens are sleeping in shelters and that New York experiences an 82% increase in homelessness within the last decade. Rising rents, stagnating incomes, along with devastating policy decisions have limited access to affordable and supportive housing for homeless and extremely low-income

New Yorkers.” (*Coalitionforthehomeless.Org*). This has directly resulted in a higher rate of homelessness being experienced by students within minority groups.

According to an article released by Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), one in ten students studying within New York City charter and public schools have experienced unstable living conditions and homelessness. (*See Table 1.*)

Table 1

Students Identified as Homeless <i>2018-19 Source: SIRS</i>
<i>s = suppressed (1-4 students identified as homeless)*</i>
<i>*Additional cells may be suppressed, since totals are included.</i>

Totals	2018-2019
NYC, including Charter Schools in NYC	114,085
Rest of State, including Charter Schools in ROS	34,469
	1 48,554
NYC (not incl Charters)	103,013
Rest of State (not incl Charters)	33,961
Charter Schools Statewide	11,580
	1 48,554

Grade Level data includes all school districts, city school districts, and charter schools in New York State

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PS = Preschoolers receiving CPSE services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRE-K = Pre K programs

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KG = Kindergarten
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UG = Ungraded
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GD = General Education Development (GED) Program

Table 1 (cont'd.)

Note about Un-duplication of Data

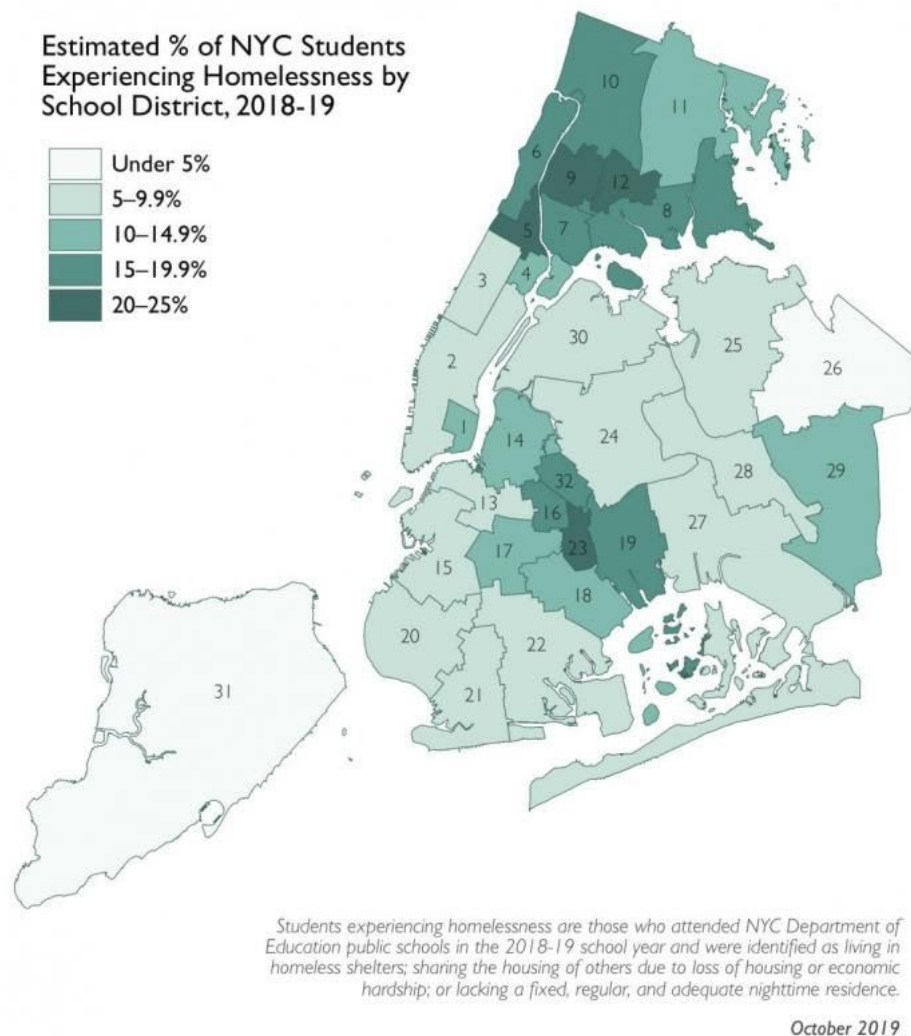
Data on students experiencing homelessness are un-duplicated at the State level, meaning that a student who was enrolled in multiple school districts during the school year is counted only once in the spreadsheet. Duplicate counts were handled according to the following business rules:

- *If two districts reported a student as enrolled, the district that reported the student with Program Service Code 8262 (Homeless Student Status) is attributed the student;*
- *If two districts reported a student as enrolled and both reported the student with Program Service Code 8262 (Homeless Student Status), the district where the student was enrolled last during the school year is attributed to the student.*

Sources with AFC have stated “The number of New York City students who experienced homelessness last year consisted of 85% students of color which could fill the Barclays Center six times,” said Kim Sweet, AFC’s Executive Director. “The City won’t be able to break the cycle of homelessness until we address the dismal educational outcomes for students who are homeless.” (*Advocatesforchildren.Org*). According to Chalkbeat, a nonprofit news organization specializing in education, “At least one-fifth of students were homeless in districts 5, 9, 12, and 23 last school year. During the same time period, at least 80% of students in these districts came from low-income families, city data shows (District 5 in Harlem; 9 and 12 in the Bronx, and 23 in Brooklyn’s Brownsville neighborhood).” (*Ny.Chalkbeat.Org*). Figure 1 shows the percentage of students in New York City experiencing homelessness by school district according to data released in 2019.

The New York State Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students (NYS-TEACHS), a project of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC) has shared recent study results offering additional information regarding the effects homelessness has on students learning. Based on the AFC’s study, “ Students in New York City who are homeless graduate from high school at a rate of 57 percent that less than other students. Data also suggests that one third of New York City students who are homeless are reading proficiently, this rate is 20 percent lower than students who come from permanent housing.” (*Advocatesforchildren.Org*).

Fig 1.



The national research from Chapin Hall’s Voice of Youth Count contributed to this report by stating that “A lack of a high school diploma is the single greatest risk factor for homelessness in young adults; putting youths at 4.5 times the risk of experiencing homelessness as adults compared to their peers who completed high school.” (*Advocatesforchildren.Org*). In conclusion, homeless students that lack the proper support from their schools and communities are deemed to fail before they are even given a chance. Unfortunately students that are not able to pass their exams due to this lack of support are doomed in many cases to perpetuate their

childhood adversities into their adulthood.

3. THE BENEFITS OF ART EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS NYC

According to Americans for The Arts (AFTA), a leading advocate for arts education, there are five ways to describe the importance of art education. First, the presence of art education allows for a traditional learning environment to become a place of discovery where school culture is changed and learning is improved. Second, where disengaged students are at the greatest risk of failure or harm; The arts provide a reason for a student to engage with their school work. Third, the theory of multiple intelligences illustrates that students learn in myriad ways: linguistically, logically, spatially, kinesthetically, etc. This means that conventional classroom practices do not engage students with different learning styles. An education rich in the arts is more likely to reach more students in more ways. Fourthly, Creating an artwork is a personal experience. By engaging as a whole person, the student feels invested in ways that are deeper than “knowing the answer.” Experiences such as this enable young people to grow and connect with one another in new ways. Lastly, The arts provide new challenges for students already considered successful. For those young people who outgrow their established learning environments, the arts can offer a chance for unlimited challenge. (*Americansforthearts.Org*).

Researchers with Houston Education Research Consortium have designed a study to help measure the effectiveness behind art education and its benefits on children's academic performance in hopes to promote the practice of art education in more schools in New York City and other cities around the country. In order to initiate the study effectively Houston school

districts worked together in submitting their findings after teaching their students art for an extended period of time. The teachers then evaluated their student's progress to see if any significant changes took place regarding children's behavior or performance. The results of this study later "showed numerous positive impacts on students' performance. Results from the study also showed reduced rates in students receiving disciplinary infraction and an increased rate of students' sense of compassion and aspiration for learning." (*Kinder.Rice.Edu*). Some studies have even shown elementary classes receiving higher scores on math and written exams as well as standardized tests after receiving a full class period of music or art instruction.

According to a report released by the George Lucas Educational Foundation, "Art instruction has shown to have additional positive effects on academic achievement, social and emotional development, civic engagement, and equitable opportunity within a classroom." (*Edutopia.Org*). Art has also been proven to improve learning abilities in mathematics, reading and writing as well as skills in cognitive ability and critical thinking. (*Edutopia.Org*). Children living in shelters have been known to have a reduced chance of making it to their graduation or college. It is important to consider how implementing art education in all learning environments will help children living in adversity more than most students who come from stable living conditions. Allowing time for art instruction has shown to have its benefits in boosting classroom performance. Math, science and social studies on the other hand offer little room for self-exploration which can cause a child to become close minded and develop constricting thought processes. For example, in math there is only one way to solve fractions, where a million and one different ways exist to create a work of art. In conclusion, art education allows for both

teacher and student to think outside the box as well as work together in opening up more opportunities to develop greater creative problem solving skills. (*Edutopia.Org*).

4. THE EFFECTS NYC LAWS HAVE ON ART EDUCATION AND MINORITY STUDENTS

Although New York State law requires equal education for all students , this is not a reality for students coming from backgrounds of poverty, homeless, oppression or violence. For example, a child living in a shelter or other form of temporary housing will more or less experience more difficulty making it to class on time or receiving additional resources in school or with home assignments. Although some schools and shelters have worked together over the years to provide additional resources to homeless youth, there are still many things to be done to help students experiencing moderate to severe adversities in the state of New York.

I began by researching the Education Laws for New York State in order to better understand what rules and requirements stood behind art education in NYC public schools. According to the Scott M. Stringer report, State of the Art, New York law states that all students ranging from the seventh to the twelfth grade are required to learn core arts instruction taught by a certified arts instructor. Based on the source findings found in 2014, instructions in dance, music, theater and visual arts halted due to a school accountability system that focused on federal and state priorities and failed to fully recognize the value of comprehensive arts education. To further support these findings, the New York City Department of Education's 'Annual Arts in Schools Report' recorded a "47% decrease in funding prioritized to promote art education programs during that same previous decade." According to a more recent report

(*Comptroller.Nyc.Gov*). Stringer's 2017 report helps to prove that less than five years ago, more than 50% of New York City Public Schools were in direct violation of the minimal requirements needed to meet state law standards for art education.

According to the 2009 United States Government Accountability Office report regarding access to art education, officials had reported significant changes in the amount of art exposure taking place in public schools. Schools located in low-income areas for example have been known for experiencing the least amount of art education. Reduced state and local budgets has made supporting art education more difficult to afford which has forced officials and principles to cut core art, music and dance classes. Some school officials have been recorded stating that the requirements established to meet the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) proficiency standards has affected the available class time for certain subjects. For example, one school stated that "students who did not meet state proficiency requirements were pulled from art class to attend additional class in reading or math." (*www.Gao.Gov*). Teachers in some instances are even forced to take funds from their own pockets to ensure students are provided with coloring materials and art supplies that can be incorporated into an art period as part of their class schedule. This report helps to further prove how schools have overlooked the benefits behind art education and in some cases deprived children from learning art to prioritize higher test scores rather than accommodate for children's mental health and intellectual growth.

As previously mentioned, School districts located within areas of the Bronx and Brooklyn have experienced the most poverty and consist mostly of low-income minority groups . Neighborhoods within these areas are suffering from the highest rates of poverty and have also been recorded showing the least support and promotion in art education. Although both the

Bronx and Brooklyn areas are home to an averaged amount of 31% of New York City's schools, half of them have been recorded having no full time art, dance or music instructor. For example, the Scott M. Stringer's report released in 2014 shares with us that “20% of schools had neither a full- nor a part-time certified arts teacher, 16% of schools have no arts or cultural partnerships, and 10% of schools have no dedicated arts room” according to (*Gothamist.Com*); despite the fact that art education is widely-acknowledged for its benefits on children's academic performances.

5. COVID-19's EFFECTS ON HOMELESS STUDENTS AND ART EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, schools in New York have closed to help in preventing the spread of the virus. This has resulted in many schools transitioning to remote learning as the new alternative to keep students, teachers and administrators protected from contracting the virus. Although the transition to remote learning has been known as a historic accomplishment for a large city like New York, this solution has posed additional threats to art education programs as well as the academic performances of students coming from backgrounds of severe poverty as well as homelessness.

Supporting those affected by the Coronavirus pandemic, EdWeek Research Center designed a national survey study that has been recording and documenting surveys submitted by an average amount of 1,700 educators from around the country. These surveys have been closely monitoring the effects the pandemic has had on communication, attendance, performance and equity among teachers and students in order to promote a more table learning environment for students as remote learning strategies continue. According to the findings extracted from the

surveys, “There has been a decreased percentage in morale and equity among students and teachers since the transition was made to remote learning due to COVID-19.” (*Edweek.Org*). The surveys have suggested that the possible lack of interaction and engagement among faculty and students has caused others to become more affected by the changes made to our system of education than others. Education administrators and teachers across the nation are working on developing a plan for the next coming school years that will ensure students are remaining engaged in order to promote student performances while continuing to learn and teach from home. This includes new plans for art education programs in visual as well as performing art.

School officials, teachers and students across New York City have had to resort to alternative ways in providing and receiving a quality education from home rather than in the classroom. Remote and online learning has become the new way of staying connected and educated during this pandemic while also maintaining new health protocols and social distancing measures. Although many students are able to continue their classwork from their computers, there are still a significant number of students without a place to live, not to mention a computer to use to complete their school work. According to a recent summary published by the Institute for Children, Poverty and Homelessness, before the pandemic nearly “one million homes in New York City were without internet access and over 300,000 students had been recorded having no internet-connected device.” (*Icphusa.Org*). This number is concerning considering the transition to remote learning has required students of all backgrounds to have access to an internet connected device. Unfortunately the students who do not have the resources to continue from home or shelters are at an even higher risk of being left back because of the effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the Citizens Committee for Children of New York (CCC), The Department of Education (DOE) has been working to provide tools for students in need to help guide them through the transition to remote learning. Sources state “The DOE has donated internet connected devices including iPads and wireless connection to over 12,000 students in New York City living in shelters, but has not yet supported the growing rates of youth homelessness taking place within the city.” (*Cccnewyork.Org*). For example, students who come from extreme poverty are experiencing academic inequalities from the department of education. Students who come from families of more than one child may experience shortages in devices causing more than one or two children to fall behind due to the fact that only one child can access a single device at a time. In addition, being supplied with a device does not include the additional space, guidance or support offered in the classroom; this has shown itself useless to a child in need of additional stability while in the classroom. Children who normally struggle with their work are likely to experience additional challenges regarding remote assignments and are more likely to be held back. These effects have been anticipated due to the lack of academic support offered by educators who remain unprepared and unable to effectively teach within a remote environment.

6. SUPPORTIVE INTERVIEWS

In the remaining half of my project I will be reiterating the words of individuals who have requested their identities remain unknown. The statements quoted in this section of my work have been cited unnamed in order to keep their identities anonymous. The following writing is based on stories spoken to me by real individuals who have been generous in allowing me to utilize collected notes and recordings from our interviews to further develop my thesis.

The information that has been collected from these interviews have contributed to the overall validity of my research and serves as real life examples that assist in proving that the points I am expressing in my paper are worthy of being discussed and documented.

First Interview.

The first interview I conducted involved a close friend of mine and single mother (B) who has been raising her son single handedly since she was 19 years old. B expressed having raised her son on and off the streets and has had to endure many struggles in the process. One of the struggles she has had while raising her son in New York City has been the lack of support received from the education system. B had expressed to me having experienced discrimination from administrators as well as her sons' teachers over the years simply for being a darker race and for being poor. Taking into consideration the struggles B has endured over the course of her and her son's life, I was interested to hear more about what her experiences with public education have been like since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. I was also interested to hear Bs thoughts about her own experiences with public art education considering she and her son are both born musicians.

QUESTION ONE: What have been some of the challenges you have faced in your living situation since the beginning of the pandemic?

After I asked B the first question she explained to me that she had lost her job the same week her son's school closed due to COVID-19. Soon after she lost her job she was evicted from her home. B explained in the interview that she had been staying with close friends who offered her and her son a place to stay and were staying there for a while. They had lived there for a while, but were asked to leave when the pandemic hit New York City. She and her 15 year old

son were left with nowhere to go during a worldwide pandemic. She later stated that it took her three weeks before she had found a place for her and her son to live. While she was looking for a more permanent place for her and her son to live she was left with limited options for temporary living considering the effects caused by the severity of the pandemic. B mentioned only being offered a week's placement in a woman's home before being asked to leave to make room for others. She had also spent some time here and there with close friends until she was able to find a place of her own. This continued on for three weeks, creating a greater sense of instability in her and her son's life. During those three weeks her son had missed a significant amount of school causing him to fall even further behind in class. She expressed to me “ No one could have possibly predicted that all of this would have fallen down at once. It was the worst three weeks of our lives.”(Anonymous, personal interview response, May 7, 2020). It was difficult for me to hear B's story, but everything she had to say seemed to tie all I had mentioned prior in my work. I felt as if her words were digging a tunnel that had connected her life to the core of my thesis.

QUESTION TWO: Has any of the effects of the pandemic affected your sons academic performance?

After I asked B the second question she explained to me that because her son has a learning disorder, the quality of his education was always different in comparison to others. She explained to me that she had struggled to get her son's disorder acknowledged by his school for a long time and that receiving accommodations for his disorder has always been difficult. Since the beginning of the pandemic, these challenges have only worsened due to the fact that she hasn't been able to receive any cooperation from faculty or his teachers. B stated in the interview, “ I have spent hours reaching out to teachers, advisors and faculty seeking benefits for my son so

that he can attend his classes. Half of the time I get an empty voice machine or a dial tone.”(Anonymous, personal interview response, May 7, 2020). She luckily managed to get her hands on a second hand computer that enabled her son to attend his classes from home. It has been over two months since the ‘worst three weeks of their lives’ and she later stated that things seem to be getting more organized with her son's school as time passed by each week. B is one of the many parents who are looking forward to getting their children back in school once this pandemic works its way out of New York City.

QUESTION THREE: Considering all the changes that have taken place why should art still be taught in school?

After asking B the final question she expressed having always believed in the importance and benefits of having art included within a curriculum. Since B was a young girl she had loved music and enjoyed playing the cello. Similar to her son, she did not do very well in school but managed to graduate and receive tuition to go to college where she studied to become a professional percussionist. B now plays part time with a local orchestra based in New York City. She stated that since her son was an infant he was artistically inclined. She told me in the interview that he always loved playing the drums and had played the drums in every school band he has performed in. B expressed to me that although her son had a learning disorder, he had managed to do really well in school as long as he was able to play his drums in a band. She explained to me without her cello she may have never made it out of high school. In regards to her son, she told me that without her son's drums, he could have possibly had to repeat a grade. When she told me this I was not surprised because I had faced similar struggles as well growing up.

ANALYSIS:

This interview supports my previously made statements regarding the effects homelessness, poverty and oppression has on a child's education and how art education can benefit the rate at which a student learns. B stated herself that as a black woman raising her son alone in New York City, she and her son had experienced all kinds of institutional discrimination from teachers and administrators for being homeless and less fortunate than others. In support of art education, the subject of this interview stated that without the ability to play her cello and without her son's ability to play the drums, both of their academic careers would have been affected as a result. I believe that there are more people out there, including myself, who have struggled with their academics due to their misfortunes and have depended on the visual and performing arts to help them succeed academically. B managed to help me in supporting the statements I made regarding the benefits art education offers to students who have experienced the devastating effects of the pandemic and whose academic performances have been affected as a result of the rising rates of evictions causing increased rates of homelessness taking place in New York City.

Second Interview.

The second interview that I conducted was with a middle school art teacher (G) who had been working in NYC over the past three months during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this interview I asked G a series of three questions that offered insight to what school has been like for art teachers and their students since the transition to remote learning.

QUESTION ONE: Have you seen any significant changes in administrative support since the switch to remote learning?

After I asked G the first question he stated he had seen several significant changes in his school administration's response to the lack of support offered to teachers and their students. G continued explaining to me that many teachers have been expected to continue the curriculum that was offered while teaching in schools and that this can be difficult to do when teaching from home. He explained that many students were unprepared for the transition to learning remotely and to continue the same curriculum without the necessary tools can cause challenges in a student's ability and progress. His response suggests that administrators are not accommodating teachers and students struggling to acclimate to new learning and teaching environments. This feedback shows us that children who normally struggle with their school work are more or less likely to experience additional challenges learning from home due to this lack in support.

QUESTION TWO: Have you seen any significant changes in student behavior, attendance, or participation?

After I asked G the second question he expressed that he had seen a number of his students struggling to find materials to work with from home. He expressed that this has affected the quality of the work seen over the last three months. For example, G stated "Some kids come to virtual classes with only their school notebooks to draw on. Students have expressed missing the art room and the supplies that aren't available at home."(Anonymous, personal interview response, May 12, 2020) . He especially expressed concern for his more troubled students. He stated "Students who would rarely come to class are absent for every virtual class since I started teaching remotely. I am concerned about their future."(Anonymous, personal interview response, May 12, 2020). Underprivileged kids experiencing adversity because of their dark skin tone, or

where they sleep, or how much money is in their families bank accounts, have not all been equally provided the resources needed to continue their school work from home.

QUESTION THREE: Considering the changes that have taken place because of the pandemic do you still think art should be taught in school?

In response to the third and final question to our interview G expressed to me that “although teaching on a virtual level with my students has had its challenges, The kids have shown me what arts education can do and I would never give that up”(Anonymous, personal interview response, May 12, 2020). He continued to express the importance of art education and how it has shown to help benefit the creative thinking and independent learning skills of his own students. For example, he had mentioned in the interview that teachers from main classrooms would express to him having seen the change in their students' attitude when they come back from art period showing that teachers are able to notice their students are more awake and engaged. G later mentioned that some teachers would come asking for advice regarding ways to incorporate creative learning into their curricular lessons to keep their students focused and engaged.

It is clearer now than before that art education provides a different element to a child's education in comparison to other subjects that do less for the young and developing mind. The interviewee later stated that “ many students in my class have expressed looking forward to our virtual art classes because they are able to make things and think differently then they do in their more involved and academic subjects' ' (Anonymous, personal interview response, May 12, 2020). This statement helps to suggest that children appreciate art education because they are given the opportunity to think freely. Although COVID-19 has had its disadvantages including

subtracting several elements from the art class experience due to virtual learning, many art teachers are working overtime to ensure that students are being offered fun and interactive activities while learning from home. For example, art teachers have been assigning projects requiring the use of all household items to help to increase creative possibilities as well as decrease the presence of inequity among students all coming from different backgrounds.

ANALYSIS:

This interview was crucial in the development of my thesis considering that a large portion of my work has focused on the importance behind art education among students facing adversity. I chose to conduct an interview with an art teacher in hopes that their answers to my questions would support the points discussed throughout my work regarding the importance of art education especially during this uncertain time. Based on the statements that I have collected from this interview there are significant changes taking place within the art education community due to the current pandemic. As stated by the subject of this interview, these changes that have been recorded taking place have affected the attendance and participation of students who have continued classes remotely. Due to the lack of support offered to a wide variety of students who are left without internet or internet compatible devices has contributed to the increasing rates of students falling behind and being left behind by the system sworn to promote their intellectual growth and success. In conclusion, This interview has expressed why art teachers who have successfully managed their virtual lessons have shown to increase creative thinking and independent learning skills among their students which equally supports why art education should be taught in public city schools.

7. FINDINGS

The beginning of my thesis summarizes the experiences I had growing up homeless as a child and what it was like for me also trying to receive a quality education. Aside from my own personal experience there are many other individuals who have experienced the same inequity while attending New York City public schools. In order to further elaborate the benefits behind art education and how it particularly benefits underprivileged children, I conducted two interviews that provide additional validity to my previously stated findings. I chose to include these interviews with my thesis because they each offered unique, individualized and diversified content that collectively further support the importance behind each of the points I have stated throughout my work.

The first interview offered deeper and more personal insight regarding the rise in homelessness due to the COVID-19 pandemic and how the coming wave of evictions, as the interviewee described having experienced, will only negatively affect the rising rates of homelessness taking place among students living in New York City. The first and second interview both shared additional insight regarding the benefits surrounding art education as well as the concerns that have arisen in recent months regarding student performance due to the transitions made to remote learning. According to the second interviewee, although schools and programs around the city have come together to provide additional resources to students in need who are learning remotely there are still many students who go unnoticed and who are left behind due to the reduced resources and attention received by city school administrators.

8. CONCLUSION

The main topic surrounding my senior thesis describes the benefits of art education while also addressing the catastrophic effects homelessness has on the academic performance of students. I remember constantly having to endure the adversities that surrounded me and the effects they took on my academic performance. I remember struggling in high school to find something that helped me excel in my curricular performance and the arts is what helped me get more recognition from school advisors and teachers. I received attention for my passion as well as my skills and I pushed myself harder than anyone else to receive the support I needed so that I could apply for college. I have decided to write about the problems surrounding homelessness in New York City, because I was raised in New York City poor as well as homeless and I wanted to learn more about how the adversities I have experienced as a child contributed to my academic performance and ultimately my career. I also wanted to see what has been done since my time spent in high school to promote the academic performance of students who come from diverse backgrounds of homelessness, oppression and poverty.

Although I was able to overcome the adversities that plagued my childhood and early academic performance, and manage to complete high school and attend college. Unfortunately there are students like me who come from complicated backgrounds of oppression, poverty and homelessness who fall through the cracks and are never able to receive a college education not to mention able to complete high school. The dark truth about public education in New York City is that not every student receives fair treatment or equal resources. Unfortunately students who come from these complicated and adverse backgrounds are the ones who require the most help, yet they are in most cases the last to receive recognition or support. Art education plays an

equally important role in the main topic of my thesis because of the proven effects that have been shown to contribute towards creating strong creative learning environments that help to promote the performance of students who normally struggle with their curricular activities such as math, science as well as reading and writing. As someone who has experienced trouble in school because of having been homeless and poor, art has always helped encourage me to stay in school and has helped me stay connected with teachers who assisted me in finding the right resources that helped me graduate from high school and even apply for college. In conclusion, art education provides numerous positive and effective resources to children who come from diverse backgrounds that consist of adversities such as poverty, oppression as well as homelessness. This is why I believe in supporting the continuation of art education programs in public schools that are responsible for serving the majority of minority students living within the diversified and densely packed communities that make up a large part of New York City.

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