

The Work Speaks for Itself:

Understanding the
Impact of Youth Media



YOUTH
MEDIA
MATTERS

EVALUATION REPORT
2018-19

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Convergence Design Lab is honored to be collaborating with Spy Hop as its independent evaluation partner. It truly thrills us to present this exciting set of new findings and we deeply appreciate the opportunity to share Spy Hop's impressive impact story with the broader field of media arts and youth development.

The last two years of effort would not have been possible if not for the cooperation of so many members of the Spy Hop community. To board members, staff, parents, audiences, mentors and leadership, we express our gratitude for your time, patience, commitment and support.

In this organization wide effort, Adam Sherlock and Jeremy Chatelain played the essential role of guiding the "community of practice" and leading mentors through complex processes of documentation, assessment, reflection and data interpretation. To Spy Hop mentors, we offer our heartfelt appreciation for taking part in interviews, focus groups, surveys, observations and workshops (often with little notice) so we might gain a deeper understanding of your work.

Larissa Trout's thoughtful, engaged and creative collaboration on the design direction and production of this report was invaluable and deeply appreciated. Larissa helped infuse boldness, authenticity, and playfulness into the report's design.

Matt Mateus is the "heart and soul" of this report. Matt has long understood the everyday magic that unfolds at Spy Hop and the compelling need to better explain its impact story through a more holistic research process. The seemingly limitless bounds to the multiple ways Matt challenges us all to pay attention to youth voice, compelled our work as researchers and his presence breathes through each page of this report.

We also want to express our profound respect for the leadership of Kasandra VerBruggen. Kasandra understands Spy Hop's role as a learning organization dedicated to continuous improvement, and she has operationalized that purpose by allocating resources that support rigorous external evaluation, exceeding the requirements of her funders. Youth media, as a field, is endlessly under-researched and under-funded. Kasandra's efforts to undertake and disseminate youth and audience outcomes research across the sector is notable and displays her commitment to collective knowledge-sharing and field building.

Finally, we want to thank Spy Hop youth for taking part in our surveys, focus groups and interviews, and for sharing your important media work with us. You have helped us become better listeners and learners.

The Convergence Design Lab Evaluation Team

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: CONVERGENCE DESIGN LAB

Convergence Design Lab (CDL) is an applied research center and learning design studio based in Chicago. CDL partners with educational institutions, networks and social impact enterprises to help them better understand the systems, relationships and components that allow programs to achieve and scale impact. CDL specializes in researching and designing participatory learning experiences that use digital media, civic spaces, online platforms and emerging technologies to involve learners in real-world engagement, play and collaborative design.

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SPY HOP 2018-2019 EVALUATION REPORT

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FOREWORD



Dear Friends,

Spy Hop has been exploring the impact our programs have on the lives of the young people we serve since 2004. We began working with Convergence Design Lab (CDL) in early 2017 to help us dig deeper with the goal of understanding how our work affects young people, communities and audiences. Through a rigorous research-based approach, CDL has helped us apply a more critical lens as we reflect upon our work, revealing the precise learning outcomes that our youth are achieving and why. We are now better able to use research and data to guide us as we adjust programs to have greater impact, both on the lives of our students as well as on our community.

This evaluation and research shows us that our students are building the skills and mindsets they need for future success, and that they are contributing to a more informed, robust and inclusive cultural landscape where their voices are heard and valued in their communities.

Today, as I write this, like most of you, my life has been turned upside down by the coronavirus. I am now working from home and getting acquainted with a “new normal” that unveils itself daily. Unable to run programs from its facility or in the community, Spy Hop has instead moved its programs online. Our incredible teaching artists are still mentoring young people and helping them stay engaged, connected, and grounded as they weather this storm with the rest of us. As I take this moment to reflect on our current reality, I am gaining an even deeper appreciation for the essential nature of Spy Hop’s work to support young people and their voices, stories and perspectives. Through their youth media experiences, our students are developing resilience and the capacity to persevere through challenges. They are better prepared to make sense of the world as they gain a deeper understanding of who they are as individuals and artists. They are able to make meaning, communicate empathy and create positive social connections in challenging times.

I hope you will find the following pages as illuminating as I have, and I hope they give you encouragement and assurance that once we emerge from this global crisis, our young people, their stories, their art is what will matter above all.

With much gratitude and in good health,
Kasandra VerBruggen
Executive Director



ABOUT SPY HOP

1

Spy Hops serves
more than
18,000
students &
120 schools

Founded in 1999 as an alternative after-school tutoring program, Spy Hop served 12 students during its first year of operation. The organization has since grown exponentially and now serves more than 18,000 students per year from more than 120 schools across the state—making it one of the largest and most diverse creative youth development organizations in the country. The program's success is the result of its ability to develop and deliver an engaging portfolio that includes in-school, after-school and youth-in-care programs in film, audio, music and digital design.

Spy Hop offers scaffolded, youth-driven, interest-based learning experiences. It provides a safe space and culture to promote artistic and emotional development, helping young people acquire the future-ready skills and mindsets necessary for college and career success.

Critical to Spy Hop's ecology are the values upon which the organization is based. These are...

- **TRANSFORMATION:** Spy Hop is changing the way young people see themselves. "We believe in them, and we instill confidence and ownership in their ideas and work," Spy Hop says. "When they talk, we listen, and we encourage them to talk and listen to each other—which creates a connectivity and a community that wasn't there before."
- **DIVERSITY:** Spy Hop respects that everyone has their own beliefs and culture, and the organization gives students the confidence to accept others. "We bring young people together who don't otherwise have the opportunity to connect, and we value the forward movement that happens when there is diversity in thought, culture and voice," Spy Hop says.

- **EMPOWERMENT:** When students gain digital media knowledge, they evolve from being a passive consumer of media to an active and engaged producer of content. And when their individual and collective ideas are encouraged and embraced, they are empowered to become active and engaged citizens.
- **INNOVATION:** Spy Hop embraces the progressive nature of innovation by continuously adapting to changing cultural and technological landscapes. By evolving its facilities, programming and administration, Spy Hop creates the conditions for ongoing intellectual curiosity and supports the creative use of emerging media and technologies.
- **COMMUNITY:** “We believe that commitment to our own small community has the ability to create dramatic social change in the larger communities all around us,” Spy Hop says. Spy Hop nurtures a safe, welcoming space in which creativity, innovation and risk-taking can take place. This commitment fosters the expansion of community beyond Spy Hop’s walls, “building lasting social capital and improving the lives around us.”



SPY HOP STAFF GATHER AT THE GROUNDBREAKING OF THE NEW FACILITY, OPENING AUGUST 2020.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

YOUTH WHO TAKE PART IN SPY HOP'S CORE AFTER-SCHOOL CLASSES LEARN DEEPLY. Students push themselves creatively and learn increasingly sophisticated skills in video, audio and music production. In the process, they gain confidence in their abilities and develop identities as creative artists.

Spy Hop participants also learn in ways that go well beyond their mastery of a craft. They learn to work as part of a team to solve problems. They learn to think critically and assess their creative choices. They discover that they have a strong voice in their community.

These additional skills and insights prepare students for success in whatever career field they choose. What's more, their Spy Hop experience empowers students to become more effective citizens. Youth who complete Spy Hop programming are well positioned to navigate a world of "fake news" and are more civically engaged than their peers.

It's not only youth participants who benefit from Spy Hop's programs. Public exhibitions and performances amplify youth voices and build awareness of youth perspectives within the community. Audiences come to value the capacity of youth to develop meaningful works that share authentic stories and perspectives. The entire community is better off as a result.

These outcomes aren't derived by accident. They are a direct result of the inputs and decisions that go into Spy Hop's core programming, and the culture this programming has created as a result: the Spy Hop Way.

The elements that drive Spy Hop's success include youth-powered spaces that provide access to the latest tools and technologies for media creation; mentors who combine professional experience with extensive training and knowledge in youth development; a safe, caring and inclusive culture where youth feel supported, yet held to high standards; and real-world context, in which students share their work with authentic audiences in meaningful venues.

As Spy Hop expands its reach and moves into its own new building, the organization has a prime opportunity to continue building on its success. For example, Spy Hop might consider exploring new ways to get youth involved in leadership activities, identifying further ways alumni can contribute and making connections across programs to bring together youth from different backgrounds.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Since 2017, Convergence Design Lab has served as the external evaluator for Spy Hop's core youth programs. Spy Hop youth media training offerings include:

- After-School Core Classes
- Satellite Programming
- POPS In-School Programs
- Summer Programs
- Youth in Care
- Voices of the West

(See Appendix I for more details.)

Spy Hop's after-school core program is the primary focus of the evaluation contained in this report. These programs make up the bulk of programming at Spy Hop. In our judgment, the after-school core classes provide the optimal lens through which to study the intentional practices and signature pedagogies that constitute the Spy Hop Way. Core programs are delivered in a more controlled environment, as they take place at Spy Hop's location using its facilities, resources and mentors. This learning environment is less subject to external mitigating factors outside of Spy Hop's control, which is not always the case at satellite locations and schools.

While we recognize that Spy Hop's work in other contexts faces unique challenges and opportunities specific to those populations, we also hold that many of the findings described here can be generalized across these other programs. For example, the same mentors, equipment, curriculum and learning activities are often applied across community-based programs. More importantly, the values and foregrounding of youth voices remains a consistent focus throughout all of Spy Hop's programming.

As Spy Hop works toward developing an evaluation plan for each of its community programs, this after-school core program evaluation report can provide the organization and its constituencies with the kind of insights that can advance future program innovations and improvements.

Intentional practices and signature pedagogies constitute the Spy Hop Way

DATA SOURCES

Through rigorous and proven research methods, Convergence has reviewed data collected from the following sources.

From mentors:

- Performance and competency assessment reviews using common scoring rubrics
- Interviews with individual mentors
- Mentor workshops and assessment design sessions

From youth:

- Focus groups
- Semi-annual exit surveys of youth regarding their program experience
- Interviews with individual youth
- Youth media production artifacts
- Pre and post youth surveys measuring growth in social-emotional learning (SEL) (HelloInsight)
- Quantitative data on youth accomplishments

From audiences and community members:

- Critiques of youth portfolios by professional media artists
- Audience surveys following public screening of youth media productions
- Audience engagement analyses
- Survey of Spy Hop alumni
- Documentation of audience interactions at events
- Audience metrics (events, attendance, downloads, subscribers)
- Prizes, recognitions, awards, press reviews

From parents:

- Parent survey
- Audience surveys that include parent perspectives

Our data includes both qualitative and quantitative measures, spread across more than 18 unique sources.

In analyzing the data, we have sought to understand how Spy Hop's core programming impacts not just youth but also their local and global communities, taking into consideration best practices in youth development (Barron et al., 2014; Larson, 2000; Lerner et al., 2005) and education (Mehta & Fine, 2015).

EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND PROCESS

DESCRIBE AND DISCOVER. Our goal in the data collection and review process is to learn specifically what is happening in the program and how these program components contribute to the achievement of Spy Hop's stated goals and benchmarks for fidelity of implementation.

Our review of Spy Hop's 2018-2019 core programs begins from two main research questions:

Youth Learning:

What is the impact of Spy Hop's core programs on youth learning, identity development and media/digital literacies?

Audience Engagement:

How does youth media produced in Spy Hop's core programs affect audience and community?

SYNTHESIZE. Once we have collected data, we synthesize the evidence using a process inspired by grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). Consistent with qualitative methods, our data collection involves using multiple sources in order to achieve triangulation (Creswell, 2008; Yin, 2013).

These multiple sources of data allow us to establish chains of evidence that support our findings and confirm the observed outcomes and impacts as predictable and consistent rather than outlying incidents.

Through open coding, we aim to notice the perspectives and concepts that repeat themselves. We then group those into themes, drawing on inductive reasoning. At this stage, we also consider quantitative data from Spy Hop's internal assessments, as well as robust and nationally-normed SEL data from another third-party research body, HelloInsight.

ANALYZE. At this stage, we go deeper and analyze the themes extracted from the previous stages within the context of established theories centered on social-emotional learning, non-cognitive skills, media arts competencies, digital literacies and connected learning theory.

This process allows us to gain insights into the intersections and gaps that exist between Spy Hop's core programs and its proximal, intermediate and distal goals as outlined in its logic model. This inductive analysis is consistent with grounded theory practice (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2007).

INTENDED OUTCOMES



STUDENTS POSE FOR A PHOTO AT THE 2018 REEL STORIES PREMIERE.

2

SPY HOP PROGRAM GOALS

- TO PROVIDE a safe, engaging and youth-powered learning environment
- TO CULTIVATE creativity and artistic expression through professional training in the media arts
- TO ENACT learning experiences that help youth develop into media-critical participants engaged in civic life
- TO MENTOR youth in building meaningful relationships and cross-cultural connections across diverse communities
- TO PREPARE youth with the future-ready skills needed to pursue productive college and career pathways
- TO AMPLIFY youth stories and voices so audiences can gain new knowledge and more informed perspectives

CORE FINDINGS



FINDINGS:

- 1 Spy Hop youth **DEVELOP OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITIES** that fuel their confidence and self-knowledge.
- 2 Spy Hop youth **LEARN TO “LEVEL UP”** their technical skills and competence as media makers.
- 3 Spy Hop youth **CULTIVATE A CRITICAL STANCE AS MAKERS** and consumers of media.
- 4 Spy Hop's outreach and distribution efforts **UNLOCK PUBLIC-FACING OPPORTUNITIES** to amplify and spark awareness of youth voices.
- 5 Audiences **VALUE THE CAPACITY OF YOUTH TO CRAFT MEANINGFUL MEDIA** works that represent authentic stories and perspectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 **IDENTIFY FUTURE PATHWAYS FOR ALUMNI** who age out of Spy Hop programs.
- 2 Continue to **CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH-LED DECISION-MAKING** through peer-to-peer learning and audience engagement.
- 3 Find opportunities to **BUILD BRIDGES ACROSS SPY HOP PROGRAMS** to facilitate creative exchange between youth from different cultural and demographic contexts.

THE SPY HOP WAY

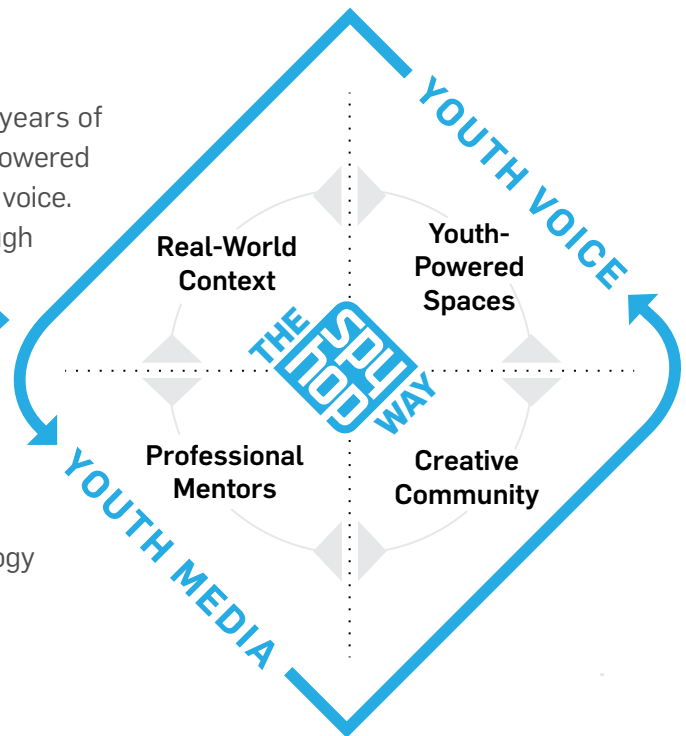


For nearly two decades, Spy Hop has operated as a highly effective learning organization that is fueled by the coexistence of two powerful intentions: (1) a steadfast commitment to youth voice and (2) a dedication to fostering a culture of continuous improvement, one where collective aspiration is unconstrained by imagination and collaboratively realized. Over time, Spy Hop came to self-identify its complex ecology of resources, practices, values and intentions as the “Spy Hop Way.” While mentors and staff might come and go and the needs of youth might shift over time, the Spy Hop Way serves as a touchstone that centers the work even amid new challenges and changing realities.

3

The evidence gathered over our multiple years of evaluation shows that Spy Hop’s model is powered by quality youth media and authentic youth voice. These values are strongly reinforced through four intersecting components:

These four components work together to consistently generate significant gains in youth learning and development and keep Spy Hop’s audiences and students coming back for more. Our insight—this is the ecology of the Spy Hop Way.



1. YOUTH-POWERED SPACES

Safe, inclusive learning environments provide access to state-of-the-art technologies that foster youth ownership and belonging

Youth participants in Spy Hop programs use the same cutting-edge equipment and processes that media arts professionals use. For example, Spy Hop audio programs use both Ableton Live and Pro Tools software, the most common software programs used in the recording industry. Design programs use Adobe Creative Cloud and Unity, and film programs use Adobe Premiere Pro and After Effects.

Using industry-standard technologies ensures that students will have the best chance of gaining employment or internships upon completion of Spy Hop programs. “We make it very clear to the students that the gear belongs to them,” says Deputy Director Matt Mateus. “We talk about this as an opportunity to show students that we trust them and that we will treat them as adults. One common phrase that we use at Spy Hop is: ‘Get the cameras in their hands in the first five minutes.’”

The physical space is also important and contributes to Spy Hop’s ecology. Spy Hop refers to its facility as a “studio” and makes every effort to reflect a professional media arts studio in the way that it fosters collaboration and creativity, Mateus says. Each individual lab is an open space with large tables and open areas for collaboration and conversation. The audio lab is a dedicated recording studio solely devoted to the entire process of sound and music engineering, mixing and recording.

“One of the deliberate things that we think about when we’re thinking of our learning spaces,” says Adam Sherlock, Director of Community Partnerships and Learning Design, “is that they feel like they are for the student — that they do not feel like school, [but] are spaces that students feel comfortable being creative in.”



2. PROFESSIONAL MENTORS

Experienced artists deliver training in media arts and literacy grounded in best practices of youth development



GAME DESIGN MENTOR, LIZ SCHULTE, PROVIDES INSTRUCTION IN THE DESIGN LAB

Spy Hop mentors are professional digital artists and youth learning specialists who model how to make transformative media. They average eight to 11 years of industry experience, have worked professionally in the industry of their discipline and have participated in professional training sessions at Spy Hop to learn more about youth development and media arts education.

Additionally, mentors are often Spy Hop alumni who come to the organization already prepped in the “Spy Hop Way.”

Spy Hop mentors use developmentally

appropriate, research-based best practices in educating youth in an out-of-school context. These practices are meant to facilitate independent, interest-driven learning. They include a focus on relationship building and fostering personal connections; providing support in the moment as needed, while giving youth the space to figure things out for themselves; and cultivating students’ voice and passion.

What does it take to be an effective Spy Hop mentor? In their own words, mentors say they must be able to “foster a supportive and engaging [environment] where students can express and challenge themselves,” and they must have “a true understanding of how the work [they are] doing influences teens wanting to work in these industries.”



STUDENTS GATHER WITH THEIR MENTOR, CATHY FOY, TO WORK ON THEIR MUSIC IN THE SOUND LAB

3. CREATIVE COMMUNITY

A culture of collaborative media production offers the opportunity to cultivate the habits, mindsets and confidence that inspire creative risk-taking and the pursuit of mastery

Spy Hop's positive community of practice cultivates a discipline-driven learning culture centered on developing skills and mastery in professional media arts practice using a professional set of tasks, tools, materials and products. These authentic tasks and experiences expose youth to the kinds of challenges they will encounter in actual professional settings.

Learners are treated as fully capable members. They have opportunities for leadership and feel supported and respected by mentors and other professionals. Learning experiences focus on youth-led interests, and students work collaboratively across all core classes. Experimentation, risk-taking and personal media-making approaches are not only encouraged, but expected. While Spy Hop fosters a safe-to-fail environment, media-making standards are high. Youth are expected to learn their craft and work within the domain of their chosen discipline. The Spy Hop Way also advances a code of conduct that stresses authentic voice, creativity and the need to use one's voice responsibly.



ALL GIRLS CINEMATOGRAPHY MEDIA LAB CREW!

A youth leadership and governance structure engages youth in key decision-making around program policies and guidelines, as well as in near-peer facilitation of core programs. Underlying all of these activities and infusing them with a deeper significance are values such as empowerment, innovation, diversity and a sense of community.



MENTOR CATHY AND STUDENTS IN A CIRCLE

A CLOSER LOOK

YOUTH-INFORMED CODE OF CONDUCT

Communication / Respect / Accountability / Innovation

Spy Hop is a safe space for promoting diverse ideas and creativity, where every participant feels respected and accepted regardless of race, class, gender, sexual orientation or religious background. As a Spy Hop participant, we expect high-quality, expressive, life-changing and civically engaging work from you. In addition, we expect you to treat the facility and everyone here with respect.

As a Spy Hop student, you have the opportunity to voice your ideas, effect change in your community and positively influence future generations. Your work should express to the world that your voice has value and needs to be heard. This is a powerful responsibility, and we are confident that you will use it effectively.

4. REAL-WORLD CONTEXT

Youth participate in a real-world process of creating professional-quality media projects that connect them to public venues and audiences

The Spy Hop Way connects youth with opportunities to share their public voices and perspectives. Dedicated partners, organizations, and volunteers support youth in the completion of projects and give them a platform to promote their work. In the process, youth participants learn important skills that go well beyond media creation, such as communication, collaboration, goal setting, problem solving and critical thinking.



Spy Hop enlists the support of dozens of businesses, community organizations and civic groups in a variety of capacities. For instance, more than two dozen artists and industry professionals serve as professional reviewers who give critical feedback to Spy Hop youth at the conclusion of their Apprenticeship workshops. This feedback is shared on the spot and in written form. Businesses and organizations also serve as clients for youth-produced works such as videos and graphics. Giving youth participants an authentic audience

for their work helps them learn valuable skills, such as how to interact with clients and listen to their needs—as well as how to produce work for a specific audience and an intended purpose.

Youth-powered spaces, professional mentors, creative community and real-world context and connections.

That is the Spy Hop Way.



ARTS PATRONS EXPLORE STUDENT ART ON DISPLAY AT THE URBAN ARTS GALLERY FOR THE 2019 PIXEL GALLERY EVENT.

SPY HOP AT-A-GLANCE

Professional Grade Gear

Spy Hop's logic model identifies the importance of connecting youth to professional quality equipment—it's partly why Spy Hop is building a state-of-the-art new facility. We asked mentors what gear stands out and this is what they had to say.



Heaviest equipment bag:

ARRI light kit

A critical piece of gear used in multiple programs. But this kit often tests the patience and stamina of students as it is one of the most challenging kits to transport to shooting locations.



Piece of crap equipment:

Dongle

Spy Hop mentors rely on dongles to connect laptops to projectors and devices for learning and instruction. Proper dongle preparation can make or break the class experience.



Most coveted piece of equipment:

SD card

While SD cards are king at Spy Hop, they are easy to misplace and damage. Small in size but large in impact, they are crucial to the success of any project: no SD card, no storage!



Most intimidating piece of equipment:

The RED

Intimidating to hold, let alone operate—in students' hands, the RED brings exhilaration and confidence, earned through the awesome responsibility of mastering its complexity.

Fast Facts

Year founded:
1999

Location:
Salt Lake City,
UTAH

Students in after-school
program (2019): **577**

34,000+

AUDIENCE MEMBERS DIRECTLY
ENGAGED

Youth served (as of 2019)
18,896

of professional
development hours
offered **PER YEAR:**
280

Average CUPS OF COFFEE consumed by mentors per day:
TWENTY-ONE 

Community
Partners:
110 

FAVORITE BANDS:
any band that
CATHY is in.

AGE RANGE
of mentors:
21-to 42

Number of bands that
mentors are in: **TWO**

mentors' favorite snacks:
**DRIED MANGOS, CARROTS,
NUTS AND BUBBLY WATER**

Names of Spy Hop vans:



of YOUTH
MENTORS:
ten!

NUMBER OF PERSONAL
MEDIA WORKS CREATED IN
THE PAST YEAR BY MENTORS:

- ✓ 2 albums
- ✓ 1 EP
- ✓ 6 paintings
- ✓ 1 gallery show
- ✓ 6 films
- ✓ 3 screenplays
- ✓ 2 weekly radio shows hosted on KRCL 90.9 FM
- ✓ 90 radio broadcasts

No. of youth mentors who are
SPY HOP ALUMNI: FIVE

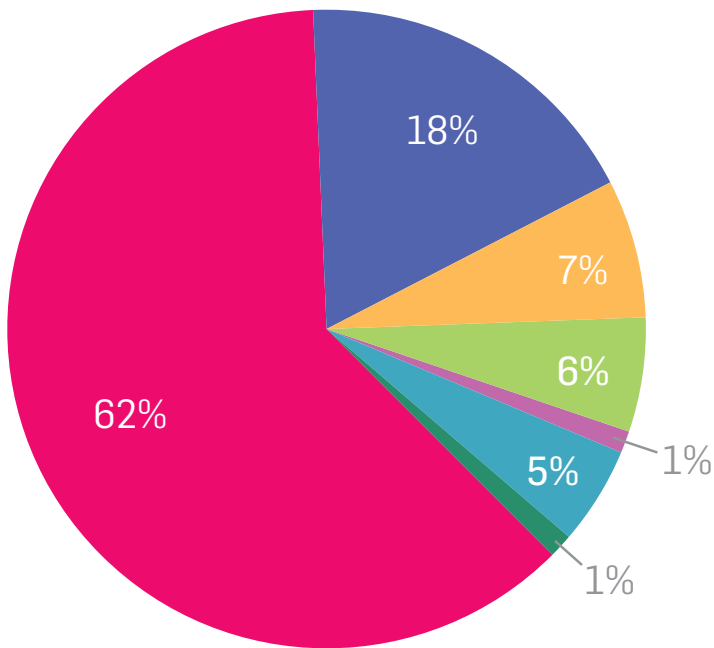
**LOUDEST PERSON AT
SPY HOP: PAIGE**
(but really, it's Cathy 😊)

Mentors' favorite
takeout:
THAI CHILI 
SAGE MARKET
PHO TAY HO

Collective number of
tattoos on mentors: **31**

Number of festivals
screening mentors'
films: **TEN** 

Demographic Data



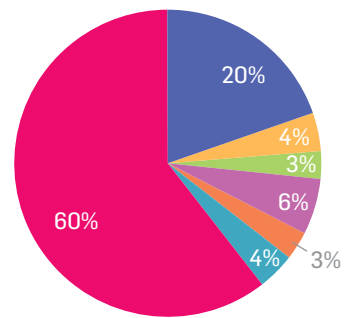
AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Spy Hop after-school classes are offered year-round in the downtown SLC studio for students ages 13–19. Through a scaffolded approach, introductory to advanced classes are offered that provide hands-on learning while encouraging students to create media to inspire social change. 95% of the classes are free.

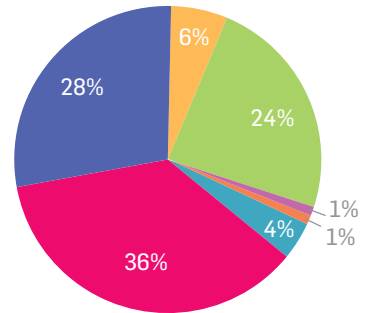
Average Age: 15.2 • Free/Reduced Lunch: 21%

Ethnicity

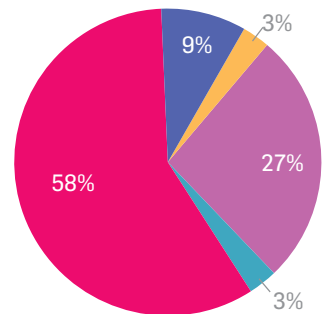
■ white	■ american indian	■ multiracial	■ asian
■ hispanic	■ pacific islander	■ black	■ unknown



SATELLITE PROGRAMS



YOUTH IN CARE



VOICES OF THE WEST

3

éíns ୧ ୨ ЧЕТЫРЕ cinco Ε sept valu θ'
 OH ʔaʔs'áadah doze mʉ̀òiba ୧୪ kumi na ʔano
 LÍX ʔJO TOBAN ikumi na cine lubali diciotto labinsiyam =+





YOUTH LEARNING

YOUTH JAM IN SPY HOP'S SOUND LAB

Getting Beneath the Surface:

Youth Learning at Spy Hop Goes Deep

"Kids started to push themselves creatively, but also started to open up in ways that I never imagined."

Spy Hop students come from more than 100 different schools and speak 21 different languages at home. Like many young people across Utah, students who attend Spy Hop's programs often face weighty barriers related to their class, religion, race, ethnicity, documentation status or sexual identity. While Utah has the youngest population in the nation, it ranks last on per-pupil education spending (according to U.S. Census data from 2017). For these youth, Spy Hop provides a safe space to explore and develop their identities as artists.

Paige, a mentor, describes how she uses a personal narrative assignment in her film apprenticeship course to build meaningful relationships among her students: "Kids started to push themselves creatively, but also started to open up in ways that I never imagined," she recalls. "The first time that we showed all of these personal narratives, it was really emotional, actually, and all of us started to bond over these stories...One kid shared

her story about her mom surviving cancer, and then immediately after, another kid had made a story about the same thing but with his dad...

We sit around the table and we just talk about the importance of being vulnerable when it comes to art and filmmaking

...Everybody [who] sits there and doesn't want to talk to anybody and feels awkward starts actually talking and opening up and realizing, everybody's got a place."

Stories like this abound. Our data gathered from surveys, focus groups, interviews and more suggests that Paige is not alone. Across the board, learning at Spy Hop goes far beneath the surface. In particular, youth who attend Spy Hop seem to be benefiting in at least three unique ways: **(1)** They are cultivating occupational identities that fuel confidence and self-knowledge. **(2)** They learn how to "level up" their skills by taking on challenges of increasing complexity. **(3)** They begin to take on a critical stance as makers and consumers of media. For ease of understanding, we have grouped our insights under these three core findings, which we elaborate on below.

Our insights are anchored by Mehta & Fine's (2015) theory that **deeper learning — that is to say, learning that is meaningful, cognitively demanding, and enduring — emerges at the intersection of identity, mastery and creativity.** Mastery in this context refers to "knowledge of substantive content, transfer, pattern recognition and expertise and understanding the structure of a field or discipline." Identity has to do with motivation, perceived relevance and "the way that learning becomes deeper as it becomes a more core part of the self." Finally, creativity shows up when one must "act or make something within the field" (p. 6).

When asked what they believe their child values about Spy Hop, the response from parents was simple: "skills and experience that transfers to the real world." In fact, 70 percent of parents who were surveyed felt that Spy Hop was preparing their children for college and/or a career either "quite well" or "extremely well." Our analysis of the data shows this happening in three distinct ways, each of which aligns with a different component of the deeper learning framework:

70% of parents felt that Spy Hop was preparing their children for college and/or career either "quite well" or "extremely well."

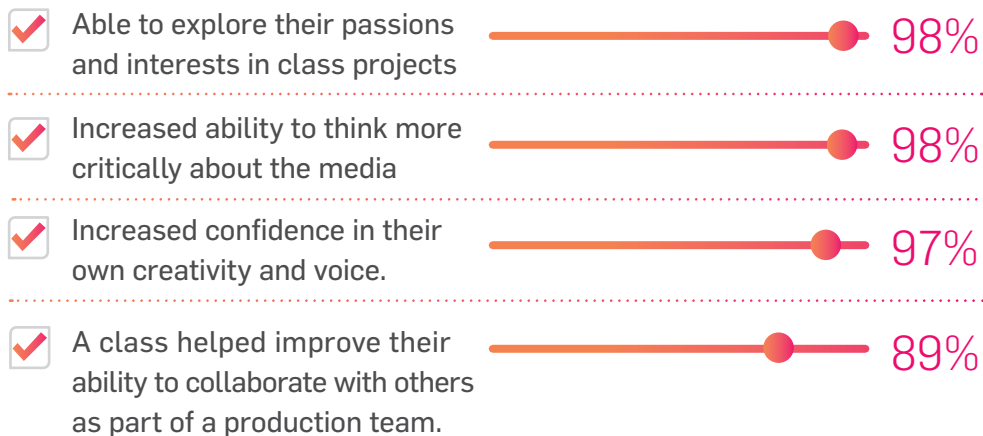


FINDING #1: SPY HOP YOUTH DEVELOP OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITIES THAT FUEL THEIR CONFIDENCE AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE

SPY HOP IS A PLACE WHERE YOUTH CAN...

- Explore their interests.
- Try new things.
- Learn to work as a team.
- Be taken seriously as a creator of media.

Here's what student participants in Core Classes had to say in surveys about the program's impact:



Parents expressed similar sentiments. As one parent voiced:

Spy Hop provides young people with “the opportunity to be themselves and try new things and explore their own creativity.”

“I love your program,” responded another. “I have had two sons participate, [and] both of them struggled in school [owing] to anxiety and a feeling of not belonging. Your programs helped tremendously [with] self-esteem and [enabling them to] see that there is a value to their art form.”

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT:

Developing an Occupational Identity

Callahan et al. (2019) define youth occupational identity as a “vision of their future selves in the workforce” (p. 3). The authors argue that while many youth-facing organizations seek to provide young people with vital career skills, it can be easy to overlook the importance of actually identifying with one’s professional possibilities—a feature that is particularly essential for youth from marginalized communities who might not immediately envision themselves in certain career tracks.

Paige, a Spy Hop mentor for documentary film courses, recalls feeling like an imposter as “the only girl” in her class during her own film education: “I kind of had this thing in my head that it’s something I enjoyed, but I never thought that I could actually do it for a living.” She hopes that

“*From this class alone, I have gained so much social confidence that I will take with me for the rest of my life.*”

Spy Hop helps other young people overcome this barrier. “Okay, you can do this and you love this,” she remarks of a student who showed a surprising amount of growth. “And this is just the beginning.”

According to Callahan’s study, occupational identity encompasses young people’s sense of “what they like to do, what they believe they are skilled at and where they feel they belong” (p. 6). At Spy Hop, young people expressed a unique feeling of being able to **explore their interests** and **try things out**, often for the

first time: “There are not many opportunities in school to learn about film,” said one student. “Because of Spy Hop, I can meet people who share my interests while learning technical and creative skills. From this class alone, I have gained so much social confidence that I will take with me for the rest of my life.” According to survey data, 90 percent of parents similarly felt that their children’s **creative confidence** had increased during their time at Spy Hop.

What does it take to develop young people’s skills and interests for the future? According to the researchers, youth need exposure to what such careers might look like and who has them. They also need “engagement”—active opportunities to take on new tasks and try things out for themselves. Finally, youth need to feel that they belong and are an important part of a strong community with shared values.

“You get experience with your passion as a career,” expressed one student. “For me, I always have loved doing music and things like that. And then when I came to Spy Hop, it was like, ‘You can actually do this in the future. It doesn’t just have to be a hobby. It’s something you can do.’”

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE TEAM

While youth at Spy Hop learn to embrace their own creative impulses, they also learn how to balance such convictions with the realities of collaborative work. In fact, while 99 percent of youth surveyed demonstrated significant gains in at least one social-emotional learning (SEL) capacity and more than half made gains in four or more areas, according to HelloInsight data, the strongest gains were found in the areas of **self-management** and **social skills**.

We hypothesize that such growth is a result of the highly authentic and collaborative nature of Spy Hop's program design. As one young person put it during a focus group: "You have better communication skills and people skills, and you realize you are in charge of the project. You take full responsibility, and you lead it to where you think is best. Through trial and error, eventually you start getting a better reputation, you start paving the way for how you approach projects, ...situations and problems."

Many others articulated the demands of **working on a team** of different-minded collaborators, or the pressures of producing work for a genuine audience beyond

85% of parents felt that their children put as much or more effort into their work at Spy Hop as into schoolwork.

the classroom. "Forcing myself to spend time on video work was a challenge, as I'm a bit of a procrastinator," one student wrote. "I think Spy Hop helped motivate me to overcome this challenge."

Students at Spy Hop work hard because they care about what they are making. In a recent survey of parents, 85 percent felt that their children put **as much or more** effort into their work at Spy Hop as they put into their schoolwork. "She has become more confident in her creativity," wrote one parent.

"She has learned how to teach others, and because SHE LOVES IT SO MUCH, she has learned consistency and the responsibility of showing up as a part of a team."

Because the Spy Hop model places young people in the driver's seat of their own projects, they learn to take responsibility for the vision and quality of their work, just like the professional media artists who serve as their adult mentors do in the "real world." These qualities are especially critical in adolescence, as youth during this period are just beginning to construct a sense of their lives and careers as future adults.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT:

The Importance of Apprenticeship in Adolescence

In many learning environments, and particularly in school, young people are often asked to complete tasks in a setting far removed from the context in which these skills might be deployed later. Students thus learn a process — like conducting an experiment or writing an essay — that is ultimately meant to be applied elsewhere, later in life.

Apprenticeship learning is different. In an apprenticeship model, students work alongside a professional or “master” in a craft and complete tasks that really matter, because they are intended for an authentic audience or client.

Halpern (2009) describes how the apprenticeship model uniquely fuels youth learning, particularly in adolescence. For Halpern, apprenticeship is not just about developing skills; it’s also the setting where youth come to discover how they see themselves in the world: “Apprenticeship provides a structure and some substance for the explorations of youth,” he writes. “Development of specific skills and work on broader identity are bound together; skills become incorporated into and change the self. It provides a means for youth to both test and accept reality, and sometimes transform it” (p. 34).

While the term “apprenticeship” might call to mind old-fashioned crafts such as shoemaking, this type of learning is alive and well in the media arts. Apprenticeship settings are marked

by the integration of knowledge and task and of self and purpose, as well as the freedom to explore within real-world constraints. Youth in an apprenticeship setting develop what Halpern calls “possible selves” (p.35); their immersion in a real field of practice helps orient them to society, providing “tools, language, customs, traditions, work clothes, products and performances” and offering “a ready-made community to belong to” (p.41). Like the concept of “occupational identity,” these possible selves are a result of Spy Hop’s unique learning environment.

Immersion in a real field of practice...offers a ready-made community to belong to.

By applying this lens to the authentic, apprenticeship-style learning of Spy Hop youth, we can see how the structure of Spy Hop’s programs facilitates meaningful connections between young people’s confidence and competence as media makers.

Spotlight on **BELONGING**

“A PLACE FOR EVERYONE”

For Ali, joining Spy Hop was like entering a new world. “A safe world...full of love,” as he put it. Ali grew up in Syria, but he and his family had to flee when he was just 12 years old. In 2016, after four years in Jordan, they ended up in Salt Lake City. Ali says he wants to learn “everything” about being a filmmaker and sees Spy Hop as a place where he can finally tell his story. “There is no future for us,” he says of his childhood in Syria. “I left my home, I left all my favorite toys that I grew up with, I left all my cousins.”

Ali learned about Spy Hop from a staff member at his school, who knew that it would be the perfect place to pursue his dreams of becoming a film director. He first started in one of the Media Labs, where he learned important technical basics like how to hold a camera and edit footage. Then he began “enrolling in better and better classes,” finally ending up in PitchNic, one of Spy Hop’s most advanced seminars. Spy Hop is “a place for everyone,” Ali says. “I feel like everybody is here for me and then I’m here for everyone.”

It took a while for Ali to warm up to this new community. “He was really quiet, and he sat in the same corner every day of every class,” recalls a mentor, Paige. As it turns out, Paige had worked on a

documentary about the Syrian refugee crisis when she was on staff at PBS; she and her husband had even started volunteering in the community. So when she met Ali, “it was like, boom”—and she knew she needed to help him find a way to tell his own version of the story.

One of the first projects she assigned in their film apprenticeship course was a short personal narrative film. Jaws dropped when Ali shared his work.

Paige has continued to mentor Ali through different courses. **“They’re not like teachers,” he says of the Spy Hop mentors. They’re more like “my other family...my oldest brothers and my oldest sisters.”**

Ali has come a long way since that first day, according to Paige. He’s taken on more responsibility and learned to be a leader among the other students. For Ali, Spy Hop offers a different kind of learning than what he can get in school: “In schools, you don’t really learn from your mistakes...But here in Spy Hop, I get to [make] little mistakes as I’m recording or as I’m filming and then after be like, ‘Okay, I wasn’t supposed to do that’ and then I try it again...You have to make mistakes to learn from [them].” Even if it was “real, real hard stuff, [the mentors]

I feel like everybody is here for me and I’m here for everyone.

—Ali

would just keep on repeating it to me and just be like, ‘That’s how you do it.’”

So, what’s next for Ali? His film pitch was recently selected for PitchNic, where he and several other students will spend nine months working to produce a 15-minute production. “This is going to be a huge growth year and process for him,” Paige says. Ali agrees: “I see the goals coming through. It’s getting closer every time, every single day.”



FINDING #2: SPY HOP YOUTH LEARN TO LEVEL UP THEIR TECHNICAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCE AS MEDIA MAKERS

SPY HOP REPRESENTS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO...

- Develop technical skills.
- Feel supported yet challenged.
- Tackle real problems.
- Learn to cope with increasing complexity.

98.7% of students said their class made them want to get better at what they want to do.

Spy Hop is “an opportunity to learn things I can’t usually learn as easily on my own...I’ve grown more towards who I want to be in five years here than anywhere else!”

This student went on to say that “being taught by someone who really knows what they’re doing and understands the field very well is lots of fun.” They’re not alone: Multiple student responses, as well as evaluation data and testimonials from mentors and parents, suggest that youth who come to Spy Hop learn a great deal about how to create, produce and distribute media. In fact, 98.7 percent of student participants report that their class made them want to level up and get better at what they want to do.

As the deeper learning framework suggests, such mastery is not independent of identity development; rather, the two go hand-in-hand, as students learn to believe in themselves and their capacities as media makers. “Spy Hop was a big growing experience for me,” one youth remarked. “I learned a lot about the technical and artistic side of music, and I view it as a fundamental experience in my personal growth and artistic development.”

For many of these youth, Spy Hop is the only place where such skills might be acquired: “Spy Hop was my first chance to get a hands-on education with recording music,” one participant said. “It’s not something my school offered, but it’s something I’m very glad to have now.”

Survey responses reveal that students are learning not just how to use media technology, but how to troubleshoot and solve real problems on the fly, when faced with an unfamiliar situation: “The most challenging part, in my opinion, has just been adjusting to new software and equipment. I use Reaper and a MIDI Keyboard to make my stuff at home, so Ableton with a drum machine is new to me. My response? Just kept playing with it, and now I feel like I have a bit more of an understanding with this new toolset, which is pretty exciting.”

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT:

The Importance of Psychological Safety

The term “psychological safety” comes from organizational psychologist Amy Edmonson (1999). It refers to a work environment in which individuals feel like they can be their true selves and take risks without fearing negative consequences. While much of the research surrounding psychological safety has taken place in business settings, it’s worth noting how the pre-professional atmosphere of Spy Hop mirrors the kind of positive culture one might hope to see in a real workplace. As one student remarked, “I felt safe enough in that space that I could take criticism. It was always very constructive, very good, and I feel like that’s what has made me more comfortable to go out and play shows on my own, and book shows on my own.”

But safety is only part of the equation. The signature “Spy Hop push” is a move that mentors use to encourage students to produce their best work. “You need to learn how to play guitar this year,” Cathy, a music mentor, recalls saying to one of her students. “You need to push yourself forward so that you can run your own show, you know?” Cathy describes how many students come to her class with a wealth of raw talent, looking to be challenged. For her, this means encouraging them to pick up new skills and being straightforward with them when they’ve missed the mark: “I would just be very direct and say like, ‘That doesn’t work,’ or ‘You’re playing a wrong note here.’”

According to the research on organizational learning, groups need both safety and high standards in order to grow. In particular, Higgins & Weiner’s analysis (2017) of organizational culture across U.S. schools has found that performance and improvement among professionals is strongest when they can feel supported, yet held to high expectations for producing high-quality work.

At Spy Hop, students are welcomed at all levels, yet simultaneously pushed to take on challenges of increasing complexity. One parent marveled at how much her son had grown in his time at Spy Hop: “He feels safe, and his negative self-talk from depression has decreased. I love seeing this confidence slowly transfer to other areas of his community and life.”

Spotlight on MENTORSHIP

'EVERY PERSON DESERVES TO ...NOT FEEL JUDGED'

Hanna never had any musical training before she came to Spy Hop. The Musicology class “was the first formal music program that I’ve ever been a part of,” she says.

You wouldn’t know it from listening to her sing lead vocals on “Glass Heart,” a hauntingly beautiful song that she and the other students in the class recorded as part of an 11-track album they wrote, produced, and performed under the group name *Sincerely, The Universe*.

Before joining Musicology, Hanna had watched her dad sing and write songs. She was a prolific writer herself, keeping a journal from a very young age — though she never dared share her work with anyone. “I have really, really bad anxiety. I’m constantly nervous, and I’m always in my head,” Hanna says. “I think writing was a way for me to pour all of my thoughts out in a healthy way. I start out with poems and then they turn into songs.”

Hanna’s mother knew how much she wanted to be in a band and to share her music with other people. So she texted Hanna a link to the Musicology class. “She was like, ‘You need to do this. Even if you don’t try out, just sign up. It’s something you’ve always wanted to do,’” Hanna recalls.

Auditioning for the class “was the scariest thing I’ve ever done in my whole life,” she says. She admits that she was intimidated by the other students at the audition: “They

clearly knew what they were doing, and they clearly had [experience] with trying out for things. I was just going in like, ‘I like singing—and I write songs sometimes.’”

But the great thing about the Spy Hop environment was that, although she felt like an outsider at first, she quickly felt welcomed into a learning community—and her creative confidence grew. “I was very nervous to play my music and show people my lyrics, because they were so personal to me,” she says. “But towards the end of the program, it became more [a feeling] of excitement. If it wasn’t for this program and all of these amazing people I’ve met, I would still just have this dream of sharing my music with people.”

One of these “amazing people” is Cathy, her mentor in the program. “I feel like with school teachers I’ve had, it’s almost like I’ve had to prove myself to them,” she says. “But when I walked into Spy Hop and I met Cathy, she was just like open arms. I felt very comfortable, and I was excited to work with her. She was so supportive and proud of us, and that was really cool.”

The learning environment fostered by Cathy was one where students felt safe to make mistakes, but also pushed to stretch and learn — the “Spy Hop Way.” This was definitely something Hanna appreciated: “If she just said all the time, ‘You’re doing so good, everything

is perfect,’ I don’t think we would be where we are right now or our album wouldn’t be where it is, you know?”

Cathy remembers Hanna starting from “pretty much ground zero” and notes that she was one of the students who grew the most in the group. “She has a really unique voice,” Cathy says. “It’s very like Joanna Newsome, really interesting-sounding. You wouldn’t think it was coming out of a kid, it’s so sophisticated.”

Now, Hanna identifies as a musician. After high school, she plans to move to Ogden for college and become a music teacher. “This experience gave me that confidence I needed to put myself out there,” she says. “Coming back to Spy Hop and working with kids who were in the same place I was...would be amazing.”

She believes everyone should have a safe space to be creative. “When I was a dancer, I would go to all these different dance studios, and I always wanted it to feel like Spy Hop did,” she says. “I always wanted to feel like I could trust all of these people and that we could get along, even though we’re all so different—but I never felt that [until Spy Hop].”

She concludes: “I think every place in the world needs to have somewhere like Spy Hop, and every person deserves to have an experience like [I had] with Cathy, where they’re able to feel like they can just be themselves creatively and not feel judged. I feel very, very lucky that I had that.”

I think every place in the world needs to have somewhere like Spy Hop

—Hanna



FINDING #3: SPY HOP YOUTH CULTIVATE A CRITICAL STANCE AS MAKERS AND CONSUMERS OF MEDIA

Finally, this research has found that youth not only produce media of high aesthetic quality, they also develop a critical stance toward the production and consumption of existing media. “He is actively making props at home to use in his movie making,” one parent noted of her son. “He is very thoughtful in his critiques of movies and how they are filmed.”

SPY HOP IS A PLACE WHERE YOUTH ARE ENCOURAGED TO...

- Think critically.
- Value authentic self-expression.
- Make and stand by their creative choices.

“Spy Hop is a place where creativity is encouraged, which personally I value a lot,” reflected one student. “I feel that not many places here in Utah actually do that, which certainly makes Spy Hop memorable in my eyes.”

Analysis of interview data and focus group conversations has revealed that youth are frequently prompted by their mentors to make and stand by creative choices — proving an understanding of the *why* of media production, and not just the *how*. Students are challenged to think about “why you choose to show blood, or why you choose to talk about this topic, why do you choose to curse,” one student explained. “They push us into making our art mean something,” said another.

Youth are also encouraged to find a relationship between their own authentic perspectives and the way such ideas are expressed in their media projects.

As one participant said: “I think what’s great about Spy Hop is they ask you, ‘Why is this important to you?’ or, ‘How can we show how important this is to you?’ I feel like I’m able to go deeper with my music. It’s because of what I want— what I need to say.”

“We’re artists
through
&
through”

Lastly, youth become critical consumers by dissecting and analyzing the ways in which professional media artists create work grounded in their own lived experiences, technical skill and craft.

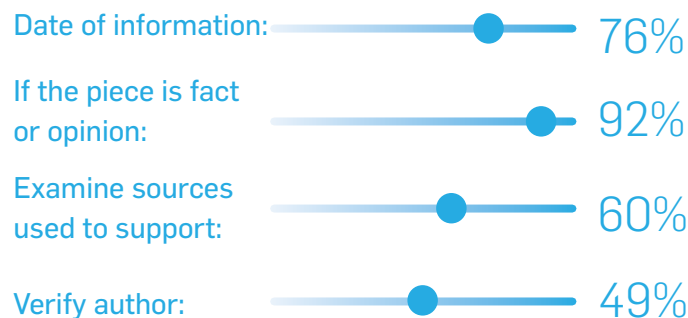
“He has become a more critical thinker,” observed one parent, “finding different ways to solve problems.”

“We’re artists through and through,” a student told us in a recent focus group. “That’s the reason we keep coming here...and Spy Hop is one of the only places that [offers] us a chance not only to share our art and explore our art, but also to better it.”

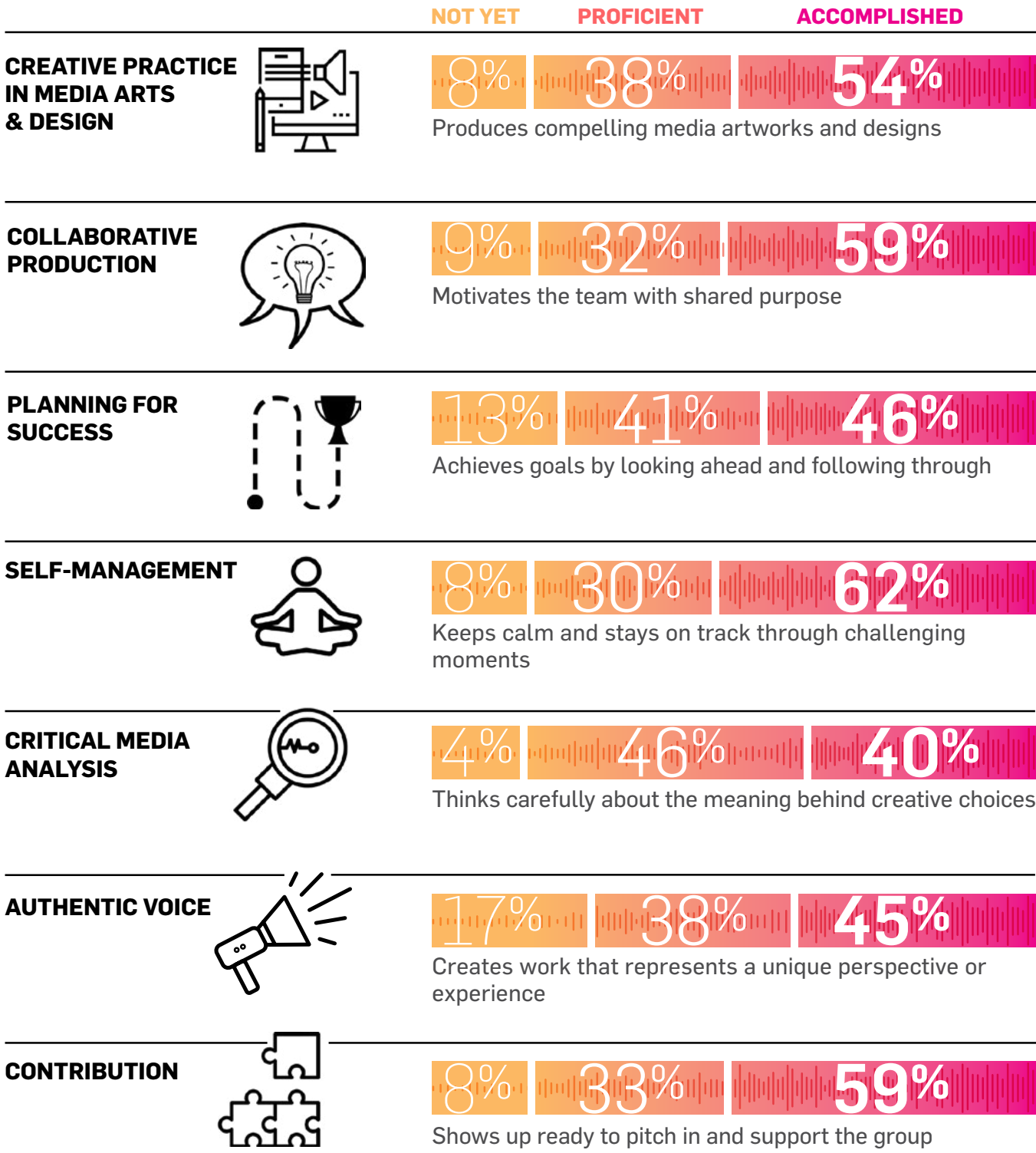


FOSTERING MEDIA LITERACY IN A ‘FAKE NEWS’ WORLD

For Spy Hop students, thinking critically extends far beyond their own creative process. Youth who have been through Spy Hop programs express a commitment to evaluating political news and media with a careful eye. According to a recent alumni survey, large percentages of students consider the following context on a daily basis:



Youth Competencies Across Core Programs



4

N. 55 youth-based on common assessment tool scored by Spy Hop mentors in December 2019



SINCERELY, THE UNIVERSE, THE 2019 MUSICOLOGY BAND PERFORMS THEIR ORIGINAL MUSIC AT THE HEATWAVE FESTIVAL AT RED BUTTE GARDENS.

Youth Media Matters

Youth have always been agents of social and political change in the U.S. Yet too often, their voices are marginalized by the broader society. Usually, this marginalization happens at the hands of well-meaning adults who ultimately want youth to succeed, but haven't yet come to trust their voices, experiences and perspectives.

Cultural bias means young people's perspectives frequently go unheard or are mistrusted.

One reason for this is that young people have few opportunities to contribute to and participate in public life. They are not taken seriously or recognized for the generational challenges they uniquely face. Another reason is that youth are often positioned as future citizens, people who one day will take part in communities and careers but who lack such agency in their current situations. Largely, this has to do with the way adults see young people. Some adults might view youth as the victims of harsh conditions, such as inadequate educational funding, poverty or injustice. A contrasting view would be to see young people as resources, agentic individuals with the capacity to take on responsibility and create real change (Checkoway, 1996).

This cultural bias, known as *adultism*, means that young people's perspectives frequently go unheard or are mistrusted. Uniquely among youth development organizations, Spy Hop is committed not just to supporting young people's learning, but also elevating their voices in broader public discourse.

Accordingly, the following section details Spy Hop's impact on audiences and communities, which benefit from their increased capacity to understand and appreciate the valuable contributions of young people through the vehicle of media arts.



FINDING #1: SPY HOP'S OUTREACH AND DISTRIBUTION EFFORTS UNLOCK PUBLIC-FACING OPPORTUNITIES TO AMPLIFY AND SPARK AWARENESS OF YOUTH VOICES.

The reach of Spy Hop youth media productions within the public sphere is remarkable. Through intentional and highly-resourced outreach and distribution efforts, Spy Hop has developed a strong local and national reputation for generating high-quality, compelling and award-winning youth media productions that reach audiences in a diverse array of venues, including online social media channels, radio/podcasting, competitions and festivals, live audience screening, open mics and targeted community outreach. Spy Hop events draw in board and community members, teachers, parents and care workers, representatives from Salt Lake's creative industries, peers and fellow media artists.

Spy Hop's incredible reach is the result of an intentional set of design features that undergird its commitment to amplifying youth voices. When it comes to Spy Hop's public-facing strategy, three factors in particular stand out: **student participation**, **authenticity** and **audience engagement**.

THE 2018–19 TIME FRAME WAS NO EXCEPTION.

HERE ARE THE NUMBERS:

- Youth created an astounding **1,471 MEDIA WORKS**, reaching audiences in the **tens of thousands** through digital distribution and local events.
- Spy Hop conducted outreach to **138 local and state events** (such as block parties, public events, conferences, festivals, school assemblies and workshops), reaching **MORE THAN 34,000 PEOPLE THROUGH 130 HOURS OF PROGRAMMING**.
- **MORE THAN 15,000 “PLAYS”** were registered **annually** through Spy Hop's YouTube, Vimeo, iTunes, Soundcloud, itch.io and Spotify channels.
- **34 FILMS** by Spy Hop youth were accepted into local and national film festivals. These films were experienced by some 10,000 audience members.
 - Of these, **18 RECEIVED AWARDS—INCLUDING TOP PRIZES** such as Best Director, Audience Choice Award and Best of Festival.
- An estimated **300 TO 400 PEOPLE** attended the annual PitchNic premieres each year.
- **MORE THAN 500 PEOPLE** attended Musicology's Heatwave concerts held at Red Butte, an outdoor concert venue.
- Reel Stories, the summer documentary intensive workshop, drew an estimated **200 TO 300 PEOPLE IN LIVE PREMIERE SCREENINGS**.
- In 2019, **MORE THAN 4,000 PEOPLE** were exposed to students' **design work**, including the Power Up! game, at a month-long gallery exhibition hosted by a popular city venue.
- The *Loud and Clear* series was broadcast to **1,500 LISTENERS EACH WEEK** through local public radio.
- Open Mic and 801 Sessions conducted **youth-run live musical performances DOZENS OF TIMES EACH YEAR FOR HUNDREDS OF YOUTH** in public venues.

The Spy Hop strategy: student participation, authenticity and audience engagement.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Each student in every class takes part in a formal distribution or outreach process.



To become a student in a Spy Hop class is to understand that your work will be shown to an audience.

As Matt Mateus, Spy Hop's Deputy Director, explains: "Every program is essentially designed around that sharing of their project. And that includes our summer programs, too."

Mentors are asked when designing their class curriculum, "What does the distribution or exhibition or sharing with the community look like?" Accordingly, we found that each and every core class at Spy Hop engaged all students in presenting their work to real-world audiences.

"If you teach songwriting, that's great, but what do you do with the song?" Mateus says. "Once the song is done, we have to teach the students how to perform live—and we have to teach them how to record their music. And then we have to teach them what to do with your music once it's recorded...**If you don't complete that cycle**, then those songs sit on a hard drive somewhere...[and] **it doesn't meet our mission.**"

Every program is designed around the sharing of the project created by the students.



A STUDENT LEARNS THE BASICS OF GAME DESIGN IN THE DESIGN LAB AT SPY HOP'S DOWNTOWN STUDIO.

TOP LEFT: STUDENTS ANSWER QUESTIONS AFTER THE SCREENING OF THEIR DOCUMENTARY FILMS AT THE 2018 REEL STORIES PREMIERE.

AUTHENTICITY

Venues and platforms for distribution are authentic and meaningful to youth.

In the age of social media and user-driven content delivery systems, most youth already have access to the means of creating and sharing media. But many Spy Hop students still lack the ability to drive larger audiences to their work on their own. “We ask ourselves...what don’t they have access to? What can we create for them that makes it so that this is something they’ll be dedicated to?” explains Mateus. “So if it’s Heatwave, they don’t have access to a youth music festival where they can play on the big stage.” Therefore, Spy Hop secured the outdoor music venue Red Butte in summer 2018 and 2019, which provides room for several hundred attendees.

The venues that Spy Hop selects are proportionate to the length and level of each class, and they’re meaningful not just for their reach but also their reputation. For example, PitchNic’s 12-month class for advanced learners premiered its films at Salt Lake City’s Rose Wagner Performing Arts Center, a venue used by the Sundance Film Festival. “No teenager is going to be, ‘I’m going to do this on my own. I’m going to rent out the theatre and invite 600 people to come see my film screen,’” Mateus says. “That’s just not something they can do.” Spy Hop’s apprentice workshop, 801 Sessions, produces and promotes a monthly showcase featuring new bands at local venues in Salt Lake. For design students, Spy Hop partners with gallery and exhibition spaces. In summer 2019, the work produced by students in Power Up!, the game design class, and Design Apprenticeship was displayed in The Pixel Gallery, a gallery space visited by more than 4,000 people over the course of several weeks.

This kind of exposure can rarely be achieved by young people on their own. And yet, Spy Hop believes that “youth voices need to be heard and valued in the community,” Mateus says. “What that means is if there’s an absence of audience, then we haven’t done our job.”

A significant percentage of Spy Hop’s budget (for items such as staffing, time, space, equipment, marketing and consultants) is allocated to ensure that youth can achieve this powerful public voice.

By allocating these resources, Spy Hop conveys the message to youth that communicating to authentic audiences in authentic venues is an inextricable piece of the creative process and its mission.



FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS ENJOY ARTWORK AND THE LAUNCH OF THE POWER UP! VIDEO GAME AT THE PIXEL GALLERY EVENT AT THE URBAN ARTS GALLERY IN SLC, UTAH.

COMMUNITY AND AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

3,000+ Live Audiences Attending Youth Media Events

EIGHTEEN Prizes Awarded to Youth

34 FILMS ACCEPTED INTO FESTIVALS

1,471 YOUTH MEDIA Projects Created

ONLINE AND BROADCAST DISTRIBUTION METRICS

6,931 plays on SoundCloud

78,000 potential listeners ANNUALLY ON KRCL 90.9 FM (approx. 1,500/week)

35 plays on itchio.io

31,707 views of youth media on SPY HOP WEBSITE

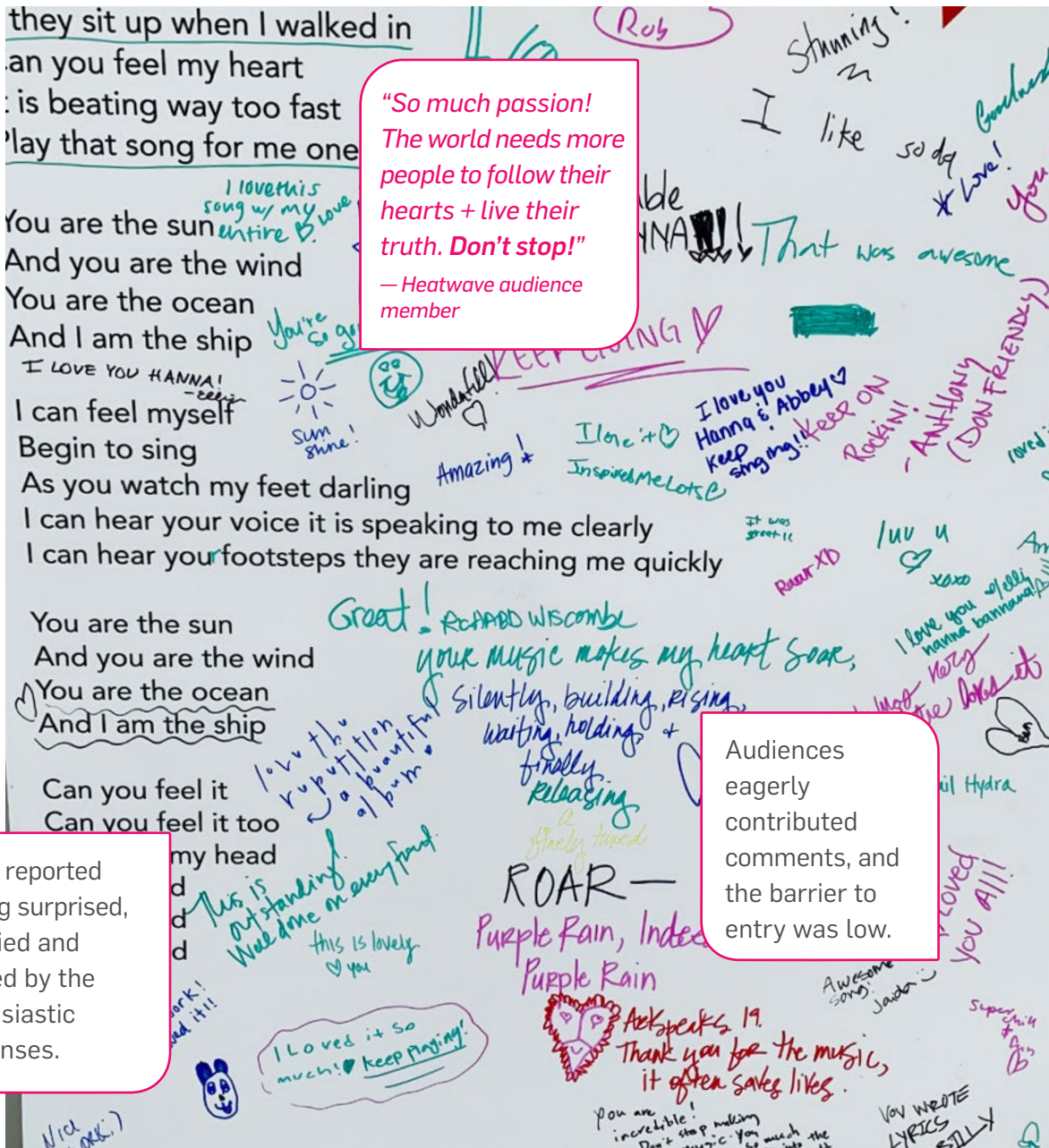
10,140 PLAYS ON YouTube/Vimeo

HEATWAVE CONCERT: LYRIC ANNOTATION

What Youth Wanted: Heatwave musicology students wanted audiences to read and grasp the lyrics they worked so hard on writing.

What Was Done: Based on this youth input, Spy Hop printed the lyrics to each song the students wrote on oversized foam boards displayed under a big tent at the concert venue. Audience members were invited to annotate the lyrics using black sharpies before, during and after the live performance.

Impact: Audience comments conveyed empathy, admiration and sensitivity to the lyrics written by youth



Youth reported feeling surprised, gratified and excited by the enthusiastic responses.

Audiences eagerly contributed comments, and the barrier to entry was low.

POWER UP! LAUNCH PARTY: ASK ME ANYTHING

What Youth Wanted: Power Up! game design students wanted to engage with audiences about the process and decision-making behind their game but didn't want to speak aloud in the gallery

What Was Done: A real-time interactive digital tool was developed. Two computers and keyboards were connected to monitors and placed side by side. A sign above one monitor simply said, ASK A QUESTION. Once the audience member was satisfied with their question and hit SUBMIT, their question immediately popped up on the monitor at its side. Youth could then see these questions on a private computer and respond in real time.

Impact: Everyone participated! In the spirit of appreciative inquiry, gallery goers typed in questions about process and design decisions. Game designers responded with thoughtful detailed answers and loved the whole exchange.

Engagement strategy allowed people to view and approach youth media through the lens of appreciative inquiry.

Venue: Local gallery exhibition where Power Up! students displayed final game and art work they produced on a social issue for a real world client.

Youth thoughtfully responded to audience questions through the interactive interface.

Teamwork through making

Teamwork making this game. not only what you had to do, but what your teammates had to do to be able to get things done.

Asked at 08:23pm

Where do you get the inspiration for the concepts and themes of your projects?

Answered at 08:39pm

The Battle Within enemies and towers are loosely based on the real-life immune system, but also on the behavior of real-life people in relation the behavior of the cells. For example, the Dendritic Cell is based on an all-knowing psychic being.

Asked at 08:59pm

What do you hope people will learn after playing your video game?

Answered at 09:11pm

I hope people will learn a little how the immune system works, as well as how we went into making a game, and making games in general.

Audiences joyfully participated in asking questions through the digital interface.

Asked at 09:23pm

What gave you the motivation to follow through with your idea? And were there any times you doubted yourself?

Answered at 09:34pm

Seeing everyone else push through their hardships during the process of making the game and listening to good music. When I doubted myself was when I was moving to a medium that I didn't know much about what to do with it.

SENDING MESSAGES: PODCASTING AS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

By Virginia Killian Lund

This is a love letter to a podcast.

The podcast is called Sending Messages, which has been produced since 2010 through one of Spy Hop's community programs by youth in Utah's secure care facilities.

This podcast represents to me the best expression of the medium — the possibility to listen to the voices, the words, the hearts of other people on their own terms. To hear people's stories and conversations and jokes and possibly, through this hearing, know a little more about the humans I share the world with.

(I told you this is a love letter.)

The episodes are the result of intensive and thoughtful curriculum from educators and media mentors Adam Sherlock and Gabrielle Huggins. The content of the episodes includes poetry, creative writing exercises, personal stories, reflections and interviews.

The youth who create this work touch on a range of topics — among them, Mother's Day, transitions, elegies to lost friends, Halloween, mistakes, the future, forgiveness and love. The episodes we hear are clearly the result of deep, thoughtful and often difficult conversations and writing exercises, expertly facilitated by Sending Messages mentors. The voices of the young people who tell and produce these stories are masterfully interwoven with carefully chosen music and well-placed silence.

Together, these youth and their mentors are doing incredible work. As Spy Hop mentor Gabriella Huggins says, Sending Messages is "an outlet, a bridge, a platform to connect case workers, practitioners, community stakeholders and general listeners to the voices of young people incarcerated in our country."

While the very existence of this podcast, carrying stories of youth whose perspectives are underrepresented in our media, is an act of civic engagement



This is
a love
letter to a
podcast.

on behalf of both the youth creators and the organization facilitating the podcast, the Sending Messages producers have recently been involved in several direct action campaigns.

Listening to the podcast, I was struck by the metaphors young people use to describe their embodied experiences, and the effect those metaphors had on me as a listener. While I started out by thinking of civic engagement in terms of the direct civic action taken by youth in the halls of government, I began to understand that the very work of metaphor in describing personal experience is itself an act of civic engagement, especially when those metaphors are describing experiences for which people in seats of power might have few points of reference. By complexly and concisely describing the experience of incarceration, and by doing so with vulnerability and honesty, youth who have been expressly removed for a time from many ways of participating in society are not only engaging civically with listeners; they are also inviting us, as listeners, to engage with them, their experiences and their imaginations.

participating in society civically with listeners; they are also inviting us to engage with them

Take, for example, this young person's description of the struggle to get back on track while in secure care:

"The daily battle to move forward and up, it is so exhausting. It's like, if you're an alchemist and you have your potion, and you don't put a stopper on it, and your kids go down and start mixing random crap down into that potion, it just ruined all your hard work. I feel like that's how it is here, all my hard work, after a certain amount of time, I feel like, it's just getting ruined." (Sending Messages, Episode 73)

Every time I come back to this description, I feel amazed at the depth of description. Aligning progress to a potion, a misstep to leaving that potion uncorked—there is such an awareness of both the power and precarity of moving forward, of transforming and recovering oneself.

I hope you will listen if you haven't already. Through curriculum that supports creative and truthful storytelling, Spy Hop literally amplifies youth voices. While it is sometimes an ugly-cry-on-the-train-or-treadmill sort of podcast, the opportunity to step onto this bridge, to listen and bear witness to young people's stories—in particular, young people who experience marginalization—is an opportunity I wouldn't want you to miss.



FINDING #2: AUDIENCES VALUE THE CAPACITY OF YOUTH TO CRAFT MEANINGFUL MEDIA WORKS THAT REPRESENT AUTHENTIC STORIES AND PERSPECTIVES.

By organizing youth media events with the intent of gathering communities together around a shared commitment to youth voice and media,

Spy Hop encourages intergenerational audiences to think of media interaction as an active, social process that connects them to one another.

As Mateus describes it: “What I hope audiences take away is how our young people are thinking much deeper than we give them credit for. And so hopefully ...their voices are taken seriously and their ideas are valued and honored.”

Across the board, Spy Hop's programs result in high-quality media works. Below, we illuminate some of the key impacts of these pieces on audience members who attended public screenings and exhibitions for different classes.

PITCHNIC FILMS CONVEY PERSONAL NARRATIVES THROUGH IMPRESSIVE CRAFT.

Our young people are thinking much deeper than we give them credit for.

PitchNic is Spy Hop's advanced film class that takes place over the course of 12 months. It's an intensive experience: Students meet twice a week for four hours a week. Students must interview to be accepted into the class. Thereafter, they work with high-end equipment (Black Magic cinema cameras and the RED, a 4K digital cinema camera), receive feedback on their pitches from industry professionals, and present their films to large audiences at a red carpet premiere that is attended by several hundred people.

In a 2019 audience survey, 100 percent of PitchNic premier attendees felt “inspired by young people's creativity and talent in media arts” and believed that Spy Hop youth made “thoughtful decisions during the creative process.” Many audience members expressed surprise at the creative quality of students' media production, noting: “Some really excellent work,” “Thoughtful and well-crafted storytelling,” “Beautifully creative student processes!” and “Quality, professionalism, innovation.”

PitchNic audiences often described the youth filmmakers as “mastering” their craft or discipline and recognized the many ways they engage with the language, skills and tools of the medium. “Masterful animation,” reports one person. “Good cinematography and cool animation. I loved the color palette, great sound design and good acting.”

Notably, these same PitchNic audience members often connect the quality of students’ work to depth of meaning and convey admiration for the ability of youth to understand, explore and communicate diverse and often very personal stories. Audiences took note of “impactful themes and the power of youth in creating films with this much depth,” the “emotional maturity and depth of story,” “important perspectives,” and “a range of subjects — a mature look at every theme.”

Audiences who are unfamiliar with Spy Hop youth media often express delight at the capable storytelling they witness and come away with an appreciation for the sophistication, professionalism and courage that young people display as media makers. “I was surprised to see the diverse ideas, depth in the themes and very personal perspectives of these bright young filmmakers! Bravo!” says one PitchNic newcomer.

Works created by Spy Hop students enable audiences to gain new knowledge, perspectives and awareness.

FIRST-TIME FILMMAKERS PRODUCE COMPELLING DOCUMENTARIES IN REEL STORIES.

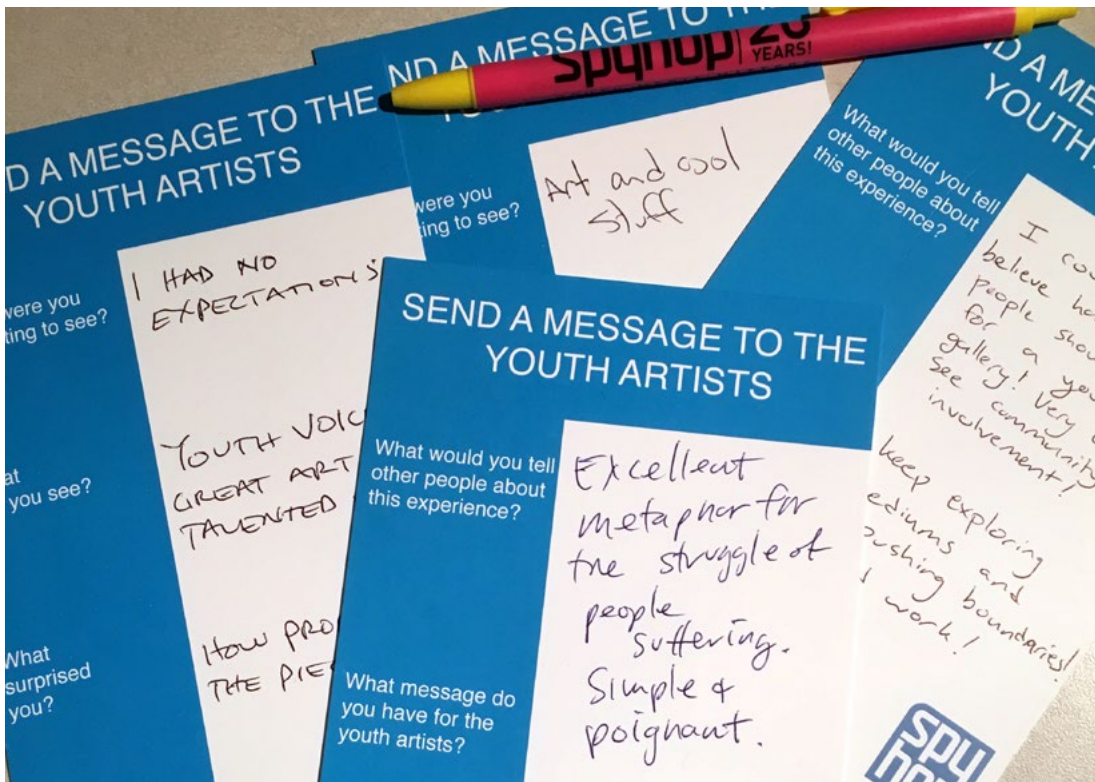
Given that PitchNic is an advanced, year-long course, the quality of production and mastery of craft might be somewhat expected. Yet, audiences respond similarly to work made by novice and first-time filmmakers in Spy Hop’s three-week summer intensive documentary workshop, Reel Stories. Nearly 100 percent of the Reel Stories audience members surveyed believed that the people, issues or topics explored by the films were compelling, the stories were well told, the films were well made, and the filmmakers understood their topics well. As one audience member put it, “This was so well done! It made me think and educated me.” Another writes, “Interviews were compelling and use of b-roll really enhanced the message in the films. Amazing editing.”

Our evaluation gathered extensive evidence that youth media works created by Spy Hop students enable intergenerational audiences to gain new knowledge, perspectives and awareness, not only about the issues and experiences of youth but also about the important role that organizations play in advocating for youth voices.

Audience members express gratitude for Spy Hop bringing youth voices to their attention. One Reel Stories event attendee wrote, "Wonderful, wonderful — most grateful for Spy Hop and what you provide for these young geniuses! Thank you." Another wrote, "Spy Hop is such a great asset to our community. Thank you for all you do!"

Audiences recognize the active role that Spy Hop takes in championing the voices of youth through media. "Brave and adventurous artwork from a generation too often dismissed," said one community member.

As outlined in Spy Hop's logic model (see Appendix II), when audiences gain new knowledge and perspectives by engaging with youth media projects, diverse youth voices are more likely to be listened to, valued and included in school, community and public dialogue. When youth gain a public voice, communities can become empowered and positively transformed.



AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT CARDS AT THE PIXEL GALLERY EXHIBITION, 2019.

IN POWERFUL DOCUMENTARY, YOUTH ARE WORRIED.

Spy Hop Deputy Director Matt Mateus believes that much of the media youth create is more authentic than commercial media. He points to the example of a short documentary created in *Reel Stories* in summer 2019 called *Worried*.



Worried is an example of what happens at Spy Hop when adults get out of the way and make space for youth to talk openly about their experiences and concerns. The film helps adult audiences gain

access to the perspective young people have on the world they are growing up in. “It’s kind of troubling,” opines Mateus, “with what all these kids are thinking about, but there is no more authentic way to capture this than having a young person ask another ... what they’re worried about in their lives right now.”

I’m worried about my future. Just the thought of the unknown terrifies me.

I’m afraid of walking alone.

The future scares me—climate change, pollution, water...

Weighing on me is the hate toward people like me who are LGBTQ.

What scares me are statistics of how many teenagers have taken their own life.

Safety in general at school—school shootings.

Mateus hopes that media projects like *Worried* will convince adults to take youth voices seriously and value what they have to offer: “What I hope [audiences] take away is our young people are thinking much deeper than we give them credit for.” When youth media creators and adult audiences engage in real exchange, that, in his words, is “the coolest thing.”

Spotlight on PitchNic

WORKING AT THE PROFESSIONAL LEVEL

In a powerful 12-minute documentary called *Sown*, Spy Hop youth participant Calvin shows what it's like for students to live in fear of a school shooting—and worse, how resigned they are to the idea that legislators won't act to protect them.

The artistry of the film reinforces its theme, with Calvin (as director) choosing close shots of static, empty classrooms rather than images of vibrant learning communities to create a sense of claustrophobia and support the idea that nothing seems to be changing.

For the students who were interviewed in the film, that might be true. But for Spy Hop participants, change is very real, as dynamic growth is a key outcome of the program.

Youth who take part in Spy Hop programming not only become more proficient at their craft; they experience significant personal and professional development as well. They learn how to work together effectively, accept constructive feedback and function as part of a team—skills that will help them succeed in the real world. And Calvin himself is a perfect example.

Calvin created *Sown* for PitchNic, a 12-month experience in which student filmmakers

develop an idea, pitch their film to a professional panel, spend the summer in production and screen the finished product at a red carpet premiere. He was part of a three-student team that included a co-producer and a cinematographer.

A critical aspect of the experience was “learning how to work with a lot of people who have different perspectives,” he notes. To work effectively as a team, the students had to learn how to communicate their vision to each other and listen to one another's ideas.

“On set, everyone had different tastes in how they made stuff, but also what type of films they liked,” Calvin says. “Whether you're the director or the cinematographer, you have to both take what they're saying and also show them what you like.”

Calvin's mentor for the project was Paige, who has worked as a documentary filmmaker for National Geographic and the History Channel, among other TV networks. In keeping with the Spy Hop method, Paige balanced hands-on guidance and support with self-efficacy and student agency, giving Calvin and the others the freedom to learn—and make mistakes—on their own.

The mentors know when to be there...but when we got on set, it's like, 'Okay, this is your time.'

—Calvin

Calvin really appreciated this empowering approach. “I like this class more than other filmmaking classes I've taken, because it's extremely hands off in your production line,” he says. The mentors “know when to be there to help us do stuff...but then when we actually got on set, it's like, ‘Okay, this is your time to shine. Go ahead.’ And that was really useful for me, not only because they helped me prep beforehand so I knew what to do, but also so that when I struggled with my stuff, I had to figure out how to handle it.” He adds: “It was helping me learn on my own.”

By his own admission, he made some mistakes that he was able to learn from during production. But perhaps the most important lesson he learned was how to learn—and how to accept feedback gracefully from others.

“When he first started, he gave a lot of pushback to criticism,” says his mentor, Paige. “To see him go from somebody who refused any help from anyone, to someone who took it with open arms and was so proud of himself and so eager to learn—that was really cool.”



LOOKING AHEAD

'The Door Is Always Going to Be Open'

Students come to Spy Hop as young as nine years old, and they often stay until they're 19. For the students we talked to, Spy Hop is not just a place you pass through: It's a gateway to a productive future.

"A lot of people who come to be creative at Spy Hop, they don't leave it [as] just a hobby. They take it and [are] able to apply it to real life," mused one student. "It looks great on a resume. Everybody, all the mentors, will always write amazing letters of recommendation." According to a youth survey, 99 percent of students reported feeling more prepared for future internships, jobs and other opportunities in the field of media.

Youth who age out of Spy Hop go on to pursue impressive careers and courses of study. Of alumni recently surveyed, 66 percent were working either full or part-time and another 23 percent were in school, studying topics ranging from music technology to engineering and welding. While about half of alumni

surveyed reported being in a degree program or field related to their media arts experiences at Spy Hop, 76 percent agreed that Spy Hop programs gave them the skills they need to succeed in their chosen professions—whatever they may be.

Time and again, young people describe how the professional skills and networks they developed at Spy Hop will propel them into their future: “I graduated high school last year, so I’m in the process of figuring stuff out,” one student explained, “but my band — the majority of which I met at Spy Hop, either just passing in the halls or being in programs together — we’re planning on getting an apartment together this summer, and then next summer we’re going to go on tour.”

Quotes like this cause us to wonder: To what extent are alumni finding or building the kind of creative community they enjoyed at Spy Hop after they leave? While alumni were in agreement that Spy Hop helped them explore career options and pursue further education, they were somewhat more divided on whether Spy Hop equipped them with a lasting professional and social network.

Still, youth feel that Spy Hop is a place that will always welcome them back with open arms. In fact, at any given time, as many as half of the Spy Hop staff mentors are alums of their youth programs. However, there was also a tension here around the notion of “leaving the nest.” “I feel like the door is always going to be open to me at Spy Hop,” marveled one student, “even though I turn 20 in September, so I can’t technically take any more classes.”

Youth highly value their experiences at Spy Hop. According to data from HelloInsight, youth who were asked whether they would recommend the program to a friend agreed or strongly agreed 96 percent of the time. From our conversations with Spy Hop students and alumni, they also have ideas

96% of students would recommend the Spy Hop program to a friend.

about how they would like to see the institution evolve. Based on the data gathered here, we offer three recommendations for ways that Spy Hop can continue to build on its commitment to young people’s ongoing success.

RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATION ONE

1 Identify future pathways for alumni who age out of Spy Hop programs.

“Yes, you love music, but how do you actually achieve being a musician? Or how can you be a filmmaker in the real world?”

—Youth Action Council participant

“No matter where I go in the future, or where my degree takes me, I know I’m always going to be working with art and music in some way, and I feel like if there’s ever something I need, or an internship, or something, I can always go to Spy Hop.”

An opportunity for growth at Spy Hop would be to build on the success of its programs in producing alumni with a strong affinity for the organization. Many youth who move through the program already become mentors; others go on to study or work in media arts industries. Some even talk about wanting to start their own Spy Hop one day.

What other pathways might exist for alumni? How can Spy Hop continue to serve and support young people and alumni who have aged out of their programs?

RECOMMENDATION TWO

2 Continue to create opportunities for youth-led decision-making through peer-to-peer learning and audience engagement.

Spy Hop youth demonstrate strong leadership capacity and engagement, both during and after their time at Spy Hop. We recommend identifying more opportunities for current youth to shape the culture and direction of Spy Hop's programming and audience engagement efforts. A 2004 report from the Young Wisdom Project articulates a spectrum of youth leadership, ranging from youth-serving organizations to those that are driven, run and ultimately led by young people:

“ A youth-led organization or project is one in which the youth constituents decide what gets done and how it gets done. Youth led does not necessarily mean 'no adult involvement or role.' 'Youth led' is a specific relationship between youth and adults [in which] adults...play the roles of coaches, trainers and advisors to young people who are the decision makers. Youth leadership promotes the notion that adult allies should not do for youth what young people can do for themselves.” (p. 16)

According to the report, youth-led organizations can be more sustainable, more youth-friendly and better at preparing young people for the kind of broader civic engagement they might participate in going forward. Data from Spy Hop's HelloInsight profile suggests that “creat[ing] opportunities for young people to lead program activities” would also improve students' ability to develop new skills and leadership capacities.

From Youth-Centered to Youth-Led: From its Youth Action Council (YAC) to its peer mentors, Spy Hop understands the value of youth leadership. One of the big projects for the YAC was rewriting the student code of content. One member of the council hoped that a student-made code would be more “reasonable,” because “it's not an adult telling you what not to do.”

In fact, rather than writing out a prescriptive list of rules, the youth opted instead to pose for their peers a series of critical questions:

- Why is it important to create this piece?
- Who is your audience? Who are you trying to reach?
- What resources or support do you need to achieve success?
- Why should you tell this story? How can you provide perspective?
- What will your audience take away?



LOUD & CLEAR YOUTH RADIO STUDENTS HOST THE 2019 HEATWAVE FESTIVAL.

While the YAC provides guidance across the organization, peer mentors are experienced Spy Hoppers who support the learning of newer students in specific classes. Being able to relate to the challenges their peers are facing turns out to be a huge asset: “I’m able to look at some of those kids and just be like, ‘I know how they’re feeling. I know what they’re going through. I know what a lot of their questions might be,’” explained one peer mentor.

Spy Hop students also want their perspectives, media works and creative processes to be valued and taken seriously, and they benefit from efforts to bring their work to authentic audiences. During our evaluation, we saw that the most successful engagement efforts occurred when youth were about to speak directly about their goals and what they wanted audiences to take away from their media work. The lyric boards at Heatwave and the Power Up! Launch Party are outstanding examples of using participatory, playful and meaningful methods to open up a dialogical exchange between youth and audiences.

Youth-led audience engagement efforts should be expanded in order to deepen audience understanding of youth media and to help young people gain experience and confidence in exercising their public voice

RECOMMENDATION THREE

- 3 Find opportunities to build bridges across Spy Hop programs to facilitate creative exchange between youth from different cultural and demographic contexts.**

“I think it would be cool to...see us being able to take some of the kids that we're teaching outside of this building, and...bring them here.”
—Youth Action Council participant

“I'd say I want more diversity, because there are a lot of huge minority populations in Utah and Salt Lake [City].”
—Youth Action Council participant

Finally, we believe that Spy Hop could benefit greatly from exploring the possibility of bridge-building across student populations. Spy Hop's many ambitious programs span a wide range of contexts and demographics—from its Sending Messages and Youth in Care programs, which reach into the juvenile justice, foster care and residential treatment systems, to its core programs that happen on-site and its outreach to local schools and communities. With Voices of the West, Spy Hop also has the opportunity to connect students from more rural communities with those living in Salt Lake City.

We believe that powerful civic dialogue would emerge from an intersecting of these unique groups of young people. How might Spy Hop encourage young people from across programs to share their media and perspectives across perceived boundaries?

SPY HOP ALUMNI ARE MORE CIVICALLY ENGAGED

Spy Hop youth recognize that their perspectives matter — an insight they take far beyond the walls of the organization. According to a 2018 survey, Spy Hop alumni are significantly more civically engaged than the general youth population as indicated by several measures.

For instance, nearly double the number of Spy Hop alumni were registered to vote in 2018, as compared with the national average among 18- to 24-year-olds (89 percent vs. 49 percent). Nearly the same percentage of alumni reported actually voting in the 2016 presidential election, almost twice the national average of the same age group (85 percent vs. 43 percent). Alumni were also highly likely to create and sign political petitions, contact elected officials and volunteer within their communities.



CONCLUSION

Working Toward a More Creative, Resilient and Inclusive Society

SPY HOP STUDENTS COLLABORATE ON HIP HOP LYRICS IN THE RESONATE CLASS.

Spy Hop envisions a world in which youth media and youth voices matter. To get there, the organization has invested in the Spy Hop Way with countless hours of training, capital investments, dedicated staff and volunteers and a powerful commitment to letting youth lead. Its theory of action states:

If Spy Hop provides a media production environment grounded in best practices of positive youth development, Utah youth will overcome the challenges caused by educational, technological and economic opportunity gaps so that they can develop the necessary social awareness, communication skills and creative confidence to share their voices and perspectives and contribute to a more creative, resilient and inclusive society.

It will take more than just a few years to see the long-term impacts of this commitment. But the data so far is encouraging. Spy Hop students experience powerful learning in media production practices. They gain critical perspectives as consumers and authors of media. And, they contribute to a positive culture in which creative confidence, identity and real-world skills are cultivated. Through Spy Hop, youth gain a unique opportunity to broadcast their voices to the wider population, pushing back against adultist understandings of the roles that young people can play in society.

In short, Spy Hop youth are creating the world they want to live in. By lifting their voices, engaging in dialogue and exercising their creative capacities, Spy Hop youth are leading the charge. This report has attempted to capture some of the specifics of that process: how, why and where the programming at Spy Hop creates such opportunities for growth. But as to the quality of media produced and its impact on audiences—

the work, as one student said, “speaks for itself.”

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APPENDICES

I. SPY HOP PROGRAMS

SHORT INTENSIVES

- **Media Labs** (*Multimedia*)

Students gain hands-on experience in film, audio, and design. They learn from expert media artists to realize a creative vision and develop skills in professional media arts. Students practice media fundamentals as they produce short films, audio works, games and designs.

- **Reel Stories** (*Documentary filmmaking*)

Youth write, direct, and edit their own, five-minute documentary film that speaks to identity, interests and community. They research, write and pitch story ideas and premiere films on a big screen at the Broadway Theater. They also view and critically analyze short documentaries and discuss in class.

- **Woodshedding** (*Songwriting*)

Based on the woodshedding practice used by jazz musicians of spending time alone to hone musical skills, students focus intensely on the songwriting process to create individual songs and demos that apply musical concepts such as writing in key, arranging, melody, dynamics, lyric writing, and composition. Students perform completed songs at a local coffee shop at the end of the workshop.

SPRING/FALL CLASSES

- **801 Sessions** (*Multimedia production and event management*)

Students brainstorm youth bands/musicians to feature in upcoming monthly concert series and organize venues for each concert. Youth design fliers/posters for each concert and distribute around the city. They organize footage (audio/video) to be edited into promotional and distribution pieces. Students work in collaborative interdisciplinary teams at each event.

—● **Apprenticeships** (*Film, design and audio*)

Students expand technical and job-readiness skills by working with clients in the community on film, audio, music, design and gaming projects. Students build a personal portfolio and present final works at a Student Showcase with feedback provided by industry professionals. Advancing apprentices apply for summer paid internship with a local media company or production studio.

—● **Resonate** (*Hip-Hop production*)

Youth engage in a fast-paced hip-hop production program that celebrates the use of rap as a vehicle for self-expression and social change. Students create original beats and lyrics, brainstorm album concepts, visualize ideas for music videos and gain experience with sampling, basic music theory, mixing fundamentals and musical performance. Youth crews perform their music on the radio and in front of live audiences.

—● **Watch This!** (*Independent filmmaking and video production*)

Students work in collaborative teams to explore personal passions around social issues and topics such as politics, religion, education, the environment, and art and then turn those interests into creative short films that express opinions and communicate powerful ideas. Youth engage in a post-production pipeline that includes editing, coloring, sound design and a compelling score, learning to stick to deadlines to complete projects.

EXTENDED EXPERIENCES

—● **Loud and Clear Youth Radio** (*Radio and podcasting production*)

Students work in production teams to conceptualize and host radio show episodes, create playlists, lead on-air discussions on issues, and run a weekly Saturday night broadcast on 90.9 FM KRCL. Youth interview guests, produce radio documentaries, and create podcasts while serving as the radio mouthpiece for Salt Lake City's youth. Students also learn to interpret radio pieces made by others and reflect on applications to their own work. They research topics for radio pieces and Interpret music on a deeper level to understand cultural meaning and intention of artists across genres and histories.

—● **Musicology** (*Music composition, performance and management*)

Students engage in a complete band experience by forming a group with other teen musicians and collaborating to write, record and release an album of original songs. They experiment with different chord progressions, song structures, melodies and rhythmic patterns. Youth

perform on the air and in front of live audiences around the Salt Lake area. The program ends in summer with the release of a professionally recorded album and a headlining spot at Spy Hop's annual Heatwave Festival, a large outside venue.

● **PitchNic** (*Independent filmmaking*)

Students learn the complete production cycle of independent filmmaking from pre-production, pitching, screenplay writing, fundraising, production and distribution. Students choose to produce a fiction, nonfiction or hybrid work with a group of peers for over the course of a full year. Students also acquire advanced professional skills by working with state-of-the-art equipment. They present and discuss their films at a red carpet premiere at Rose Wagner Theater.

● **Power Up!** (*Game design*)

Students work as part of a collaborative team of designers, programmers, and producers to create an entire video game that investigates a social, community or global issue. Students master Unity 3D, Maya, and other industry standard software to develop the finished game which is premiered at a launch party held at an established gallery in the city.



2019 SPY HOP STUDENT CELEBRATION EVENT POSTERS

II. LOGIC MODEL

DRAWING ON THE SPY HOP WAY	SPY HOP VALUES	IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THESE OUTCOMES	
		Proximal	Intermediate
Youth-powered spaces	FORMAL YOUTH PROGRAMS in MEDIA ARTS EDUCATION Site-based, community-based and statewide programs in media arts	YOUTH WILL: Communicate effectively through media arts, technology and design	ALUMS WILL : Attain career roles in media, communication, design and innovation
Professional mentors		Acquire college & career “future-ready” skills Develop community, interpersonal and cross-cultural connections	Lead productive lives and participate in democratic life as informed, media aware and engaged citizens
Creative community	AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY OUTREACH	AUDIENCES WILL: Gain new knowledge and awareness through youth voices and media projects	YOUTH MEDIA WILL: Communicate human stories that empower and transform communities
Real-world context			
AS A RESULT, SPY HOP GENERATES ENDURING IMPACT BY FOSTERING:			
A MORE CREATIVE AND VIBRANT WORKFORCE A MORE ROBUST AND INCLUSIVE CIVIC SOCIETY			

III. MEDIA WORKS REFERENCED IN THIS REPORT



Worried

Documentary by Ava Snow

6:50, 2019

Program: Reel Stories

Mentor: Paige Sparks

—● bit.ly/2QYkWZJ



Sending Messages

Podcast Series

Mentors: Adam Sherlock and Gabrielle Huggins

—● bit.ly/33Yohgw



Same Color Purple

Album by Sincerely, the Universe

Class: Musicology

Mentor: Cathy Foy

—● bit.ly/2JFKPcN



Sown

Documentary by Calvin Mumm, Michael Eggert & Taylor Kiser

12:40, 2019

Class: PitchNic

Mentor: Paige Sparks

—● bit.ly/2WVMumc



Glass Heart

Vocals by Hanna Emery

4:00, 2019

Class: Musicology

Mentor: Cathy Foy

—● bit.ly/3bDoDf8

IV. COMPETENCY FRAMEWORKS REFERENCED

All of Spy Hop's programs are grounded in research-based, positive youth development (PYD) principles with an eye toward building fundamental life skills or social-emotional learning (SEL) outcomes, as well as future-ready skills in media arts, technology and critical media literacy.

Below are some of the frameworks used to measure the core learning dimensions of Spy Hop's programs:

● MEDIA ARTS

(Creating, Developing, Presenting, Evaluating, Synthesizing, Relating)

References: National Core Media Arts Standards, ISTE Student Standards

● POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

(SEL, Self-Management, Contribution, Self-Efficacy, Social Skills, Positive Identity, Social Capital)

References: HelloInsight, MHA Labs 21st Century Skills

● CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY

(Intercultural Competencies, Information Research/Analysis, Participatory Media and Culture, Ethical Communication)

References: NAMLE Media Literacy

● CAREER AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

(Personal Mindset, Planning for Success, Social Awareness, Communication, Problem Solving, Collaborative Design)

References: ISTE, SEL, MHA Labs

V. MORE ABOUT MENTORS



Adam Sherlock
Dir. of Community Partnerships & Learning Design



Cathy Foy
Musical Arts Mentor



Connor Estes
Loud & Clear Mentor; Outreach Coordinator



Gabriella Huggins
Community Programs Mentor



Jeremy Chatelain
Program Director



José Manzo
Film Mentor



Trevor Dahl
Design Mentor
In-house Graphic Designer



Elizabeth Schulte
Interactive Design Mentor



Matt Mateus
Deputy Director



Paige Sparks
Film Mentor



Sam Highsmith
Statewide Arts Mentor



Jared Gilmore
Audio Mentor

Spy Hop youth appreciate their mentors' real-world experience. They also praised mentors for "keeping it real" and never acting "smarter or better." We asked the Youth Action Council how their mentors encourage them, and they spun us some of their favorite tracks:

THE SPY HOP MENTOR *Soundtrack**


Side ONE

- 01: "You Can't Fix It In Post"
- 02: "You Can Do That With A Documentary Too, You Know"
- 03: "Perfect! Do It Again!"

Side TWO

- 04: "You're Not Allowed To Say It's Bad"
- 05: "It's OK To Let Yourself Fail, I Did"
- 06: "Oh Yeah, I've Played A Show With Them Before"

**Based on what mentors say—according to the Youth Action Council!*



Excerpted to The World Speaks for itself: Understanding the Voices of Youth Media, Spy Hop 2011. A publication report. 688 S. West Temple Rd. Salt Lake City, UT 84101. www.spyhop.org

overheard at **SPY hop**



Spy Hop moves into its new state-of-the-art facility in August 2020.



CONNECT WITH US!

Current address:
669 S. West Temple #202
Salt Lake City, UT, 84101

New address as of Aug. 2020:
208 W. Harvey Milk Blvd.
Salt Lake City, UT, 84101

Keep up to date on the cool work we do each day!

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