

### **Executive Summary**

The Raise Your Voice Project is a year-long series of three free art workshops that engage Alhambra High School students in creative projects to process, reflect, create, and voice their valuable perspective to their school and community about the issues of Bullying, Drug Use/Prevention, and Strengthening Youth/Adult Relationships. The Raise Your Voice Project (RYV) served over 100 students at Alhambra High School by providing after-school workshops (Phonetic Spit, PhotoVoice, Mural Crew) every week throughout the year. **Participants: 30 students who engaged for the entire year, 22 who joined in the middle, and 70+ (estimate) students engaged sometimes or during RYV Lunch events or Student Art Showings.** RYV connected students to specific art tools to express about a theme that they care about (bullying, drugs, student/staff relationships), and then celebrated their voice on campus and off campus. RYV was successful because students connected to their voice and abilities, their peers, and their community through their own expressions, their voice. Students and teachers have given positive feedback and are looking forward to the growth and continuance of RYV at Alhambra.

### **Introduction**

**Background Information:** Raise Your Voice (RYV) started because of an alumni student who wanted to invite students, like himself, to realize that they have a voice and their voice is important to their school and community. Many students who didn't know where they fit, found their place to express through RYV.

Alhambra Info:

Mission/vision: The Mission of Alhambra High School is to be a thriving learning environment where each student realizes their potential and strives for success because they know they are valued.

Size: 2,800 Students, 160 Teachers, 5 Administrators, 75 Support Staff

Demographics: Ethnicity: 77% Hispanic, 7% African American, 7% Asian, 6% Anglo, 2% Native American; 88% Economically Disadvantaged; 20% ESL; 20% New/Immigrant/Refugee; 1% Single Parent

The Rag Collection Info:

Mission/Vision: The Rag Collection focuses its resources on connecting local artists to voiceless youth by providing free art workshops. Focusing the workshops on the individual, reflective process as well as skill, we connect art to the heart through the power of story.

Size: 1 PT Staff/Coordinator/Executive Director, 8 PT Teaching Artists, 10 Volunteers Artists, 1 Volunteer Grantwriter, 8 Board Members, 2 Student Interns.

RYV Artists: Michael Denson and Charith Norvelle led PhotoVoice; Such Styles and Champ Styles led Mural Crew; and Sean Malakowsky and DJ led Phonetic Spit. Other artists involved: DJ CreOne, Ree Boado, Kasey West, Silvia Villanueva, Noel D'Avy.

### **The importance of this topic:**

1. Lack of Access to Arts Opportunities: Students in this community have few or no opportunities to engage cultural or recreational opportunities outside of school. For example, there are no libraries, public pools, or YMCA facilities. There is only one public park nearby. In addition, public safety, especially in the evening hours has been a historical concern for both youth and adults. The good news is that things are slowly

changing for the better in this community and we are doing our part, as faculty and staff, to communicate the value of each student through our new motto “Believe”. We believe that all of our students can be successful and that they have a great future. We believe that they can accomplish their dreams through their hard work and a great education through our high school. We are implementing innovative programs and expanding partnerships within our community to build a positive and healthy school and community environment where students are inspired to achieve at high academic levels and work to be a positive influence to the people around them.

2. The Value of Youth Voice to the community: The administrative staff wanted to hear from the students about the main issues on campus, Bullying, Drugs, and Student/Staff Relationships. Therefore, RYV invited students to speak up about these issues, choosing these themes or any other theme that is more important to them. Most of the students spoke up about these themes.

We also let students know that their community needs to hear their voice, not just on campus but off-campus. This became very clear to them through the experience of the Student Art Showing at two different galleries in the Arts District in Downtown Phoenix.

**The intent of this study:**

In our efforts to invite students to join our project over the past year, we have heard a continuous message from many students: they experience a severe lack of self-importance in their community. Many of the students have said in one way or another, "I am not creative. I have nothing to say." When we ask if they have ever tried, they express that they haven't. This is tragic! We have found that when we express to these students that we want to hear their perspective and that their voices matter and are valuable to the greater community, they begin to engage! We believe art is a door for students who have been suppressed, ignored, abused, and neglected to discover the value of their voice and identity! If they matter to a few people - artists, adults, peers - they begin to believe that what is hidden in them - their dreams, ideas, and stories - are also meaningful and motivation builds and affects other areas of their lives.

The Raise Your Voice Project will hold three free art workshops once a week after-school from 3-5pm on Thursdays. The art workshops are Phonetic Spit (poetry/spoken word); Photo Voice (photography + mixed media); and Mural Crew (graffiti art/painting/drawing). During each workshop, students will work on projects where they will learn more about the tools within the art form, but will also learn a process of reflection and dialogue about the reasons their voice is important and how their voice is relevant to the issues (Bullying/Drugs/Student Adult Relationships) within the context of their school and community. At the end of each semester, each student will have the opportunity to present their expressions for their peers, family, and community at their school and in the Downtown Phoenix Arts Community at a local gallery.

We intend to show the value and success of the RYV after-school arts program as it relates to the students' need to express as well as connection to other areas of life (school, goals, peers, and community).

**Underlying Premise:**

We believe this project matters and will accomplish revitalization of youth voice and expression at Alhambra High School because of the following areas that RYV addresses:

**1. Resources:** *Art Resources expand opportunities to low-income youth in and around the Alhambra campus.* Access to more resources and opportunities helps students connect to parts of themselves that they have not discovered yet, and therefore motivates them to become who they are meant to be instead of giving up hope on themselves. Through introducing more artists, styles of art, and various platforms that students can enter into, more students realize their options are not limited to their circumstances. Since each student is so unique, each journey to their voice is unique and we want to make the journey fun and exciting, allowing them to connect to dreams, resources, and voices in the community. Students will be invited to engage in the local Phoenix arts community through connections with artists as well.

**2. Mentorship:** *Artists become mentors that encourage youth, where meaningful adult connections are missing.* Providing meaningful connections to adults/artists who encourage and offer guidance helps students grow, process, reflect, and develop in ways that have been neglected due to a variety of situations that come with poverty (suppression, abuse, neglect).

**3. Safe Space:** *Art Workshops are a safe space for students to become more self-aware and learn how to process internally.* Having the space to process, learn, experiment, and play with art is important, allowing self-discovery, growth, and new connections with people and resources to take place. Without this space, many students would never begin to see the value of their voice in the community, or learn that there are healthy life-giving options for self-expression. Art-making can become a motivational force for many students who can't make sense of their day to day life and struggles, which can expand into other areas of their life.

**4. Voice:** *Art Workshops give students permission to play, experiment, and learn how to use their voice.* As so many students have been placed in the position of parenting siblings due to the family dynamics in low-income homes, art is a way for students to develop buried creative skills, and find their individual voice in the midst of the chaos at home. This creative process is necessary for various areas of emotional and social development to take place which allow vital connections to be formed in the brain, which greatly contributes to the overall learning experience. Voice doesn't stop at school. These students will learn how to extend the power of their voice by finding platforms in their community through new conversations using the arts.

## METHODOLOGY

Research Questions	Data Source	Data Collection	Data Analysis
1. Do art workshops activate youth voice on campus?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Post Survey</li> <li>2. Student Stories</li> <li>3. Activity Photos</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Administered by artist leaders</li> <li>2. Collected by artist leaders and program director</li> <li>3. Same as 2</li> </ol>	RYV Positive Impact Graph
2. Do art workshops activate youth voice off campus?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pre/Post Survey</li> <li>2. Student Stories</li> <li>3. Activity Photos</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Administered by artist leaders</li> <li>2. Collected by artist leaders and program director</li> <li>3. Same as 2</li> </ol>	Access to Arts Graph Student Beliefs Graph
3. Does RYV motivate students in other areas of life?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Post Survey</li> <li>2. Student Stories</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Administered by artist leaders</li> <li>2. Collected by artist leaders and program director</li> </ol>	RYV Positive Impact Graph

**A. Data Sources:** Our data sources include student surveys, interviews with students, activity photos, and stories.

**B. Data Collection:** Our intention with the pre and post surveys was to have every student fill out both, but this was not possible due to life circumstances and attendance changes. All the students who were present on the first and last week filled out surveys. The pre-survey was designed to find out how students view their context and what they are currently involved in, and hear their current beliefs about their voice. The post survey focused on how the arts workshops impacted life in other areas (goals, peers, school, expression, art) by using the **Colorado Trust** survey. This is a survey that is nationally known for measuring the impact of after-school programs.

**Pre-Surveys:** Spring Semester, out of 30+, thirteen 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade students completed the surveys.  
Summer Session, out of the 15+ involved, six 9-12<sup>th</sup> students completed the survey.

**Post-Surveys:** Spring Semester, we had 17/30+, 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade students completed the survey  
Summer Session, of the 15+ that were involved, seven 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade students completed the survey.

**Interviews:** Students - We interviewed random students in the Fall to ask what they thought of RYV. We invited most of the students to share, but some were absent. We sought out more in-depth stories from students who have been around for most of the year. The teaching artists conducted the interviews in person.

Teachers – We sought interviews with sponsoring and non-sponsoring teachers about what they thought of RYV and the impact it had on the school and students at the end of the Spring semester. We got feedback from 2 sponsoring and 1 non-sponsoring teacher.

**C. Data Analysis-**

**Comparing:** We compared the data from the pre-survey, Student Beliefs, to the data from the post-survey, Impacts Chart, where students told us how the art workshop impacted many areas of their life.

We asked different questions on the pre and post surveys, therefore they were not automatically comparable. We would like to add a section that is directly comparable next year.

**Patterns:** We found patterns in the numbers of each survey by adding up the numbers, charting them on a graphs, and then comparing the two graphs. Through a qualitative comparison of the surveys, we saw that many students didn't see how their expressions mattered to their everyday life in the pre-survey. In the post-survey however, it was obvious that most of the students connected their expressions to other areas of life more naturally. We also saw the process over the year and the stories match the data. Another pattern was based on attendance. Those students that came more regularly expressed more and gained more confidence in their ability, taking more risks to speak up with their art.

**Successful Stories:**

Success stories were identifiable through the voices of the students in interviews, and how the survey data matched what we heard in the interviews and artwork. The success of RYV was seen in the artwork, the community that students created, and how each student decided to use their voice on/off campus.

### EVALUATION RESULTS: Engagement

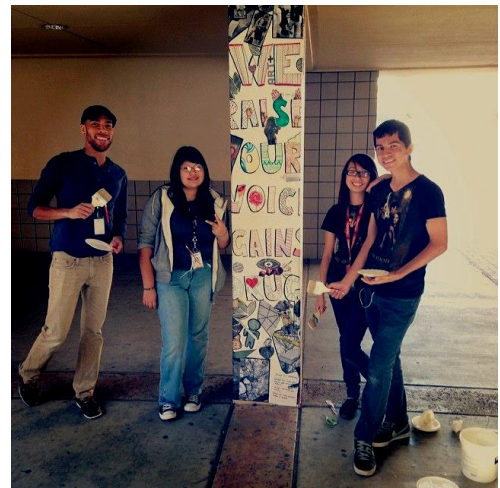
1. **On Campus:** From the beginning of the workshops in the fall to the spring, we noticed that the students were very shy and had a hard time voicing their perspectives. It took a solid month or two for the students to boldly talk about their ideas, but once they started creating, they really connected with new tools and their own voice. Most of the students have had very difficult situations in life, so building trust takes a while for good reason.

Most of the artists said they felt like the first semester was an intro to what they can do and try, and the second semester was a more personal journey into the themes they wanted to create about because they had more confidence and trust in the process.



Youth were able to make their mark by expressing their voice through semi-permanent art pieces on campus! This was a draw for many of the Mural Crew students to even join RYV. When they saw that they were invited to use their skills on campus in a positive way, they jumped on board and invited friends.

Students who participated in PhotoVoice tried out a different medium with photos using wheat-paste. This was inspired by the fieldtrip they took to Roosevelt Row to take pictures of various sights in the arts district. One of the students was drawn to photo images wheat-pasted on a building. The artists took their interest seriously and invited them to pursue this expression on campus, with the support of administration. They LOVED it! The principal told us we are welcome to cover more pillars with youth voice in the future because of how well they did it!



2. **Off Campus:** *Students were introduced to the Downtown Phoenix Arts District in the Fall semester through a field trip. The Mural Crew did a mural tour of Calle 16. The PhotoVoice students wandered along Roosevelt Row with digital cameras, exercising the many technical skills they have been practicing on campus.*

This experience motivated students to try new things and even realize that the Arts District is a place that is available to them.

The **Phonetic Spit** workshop was invited to be a part of **The All City Slam** in Mesa in November, soon afterwards. Students who had the opportunity to engage through the 8<sup>th</sup> Hour class were able to connect with their voice and learn how important their expressions are to the community through this event. They connected with other students at other schools and got excited about opportunities in their city to raise their voice.



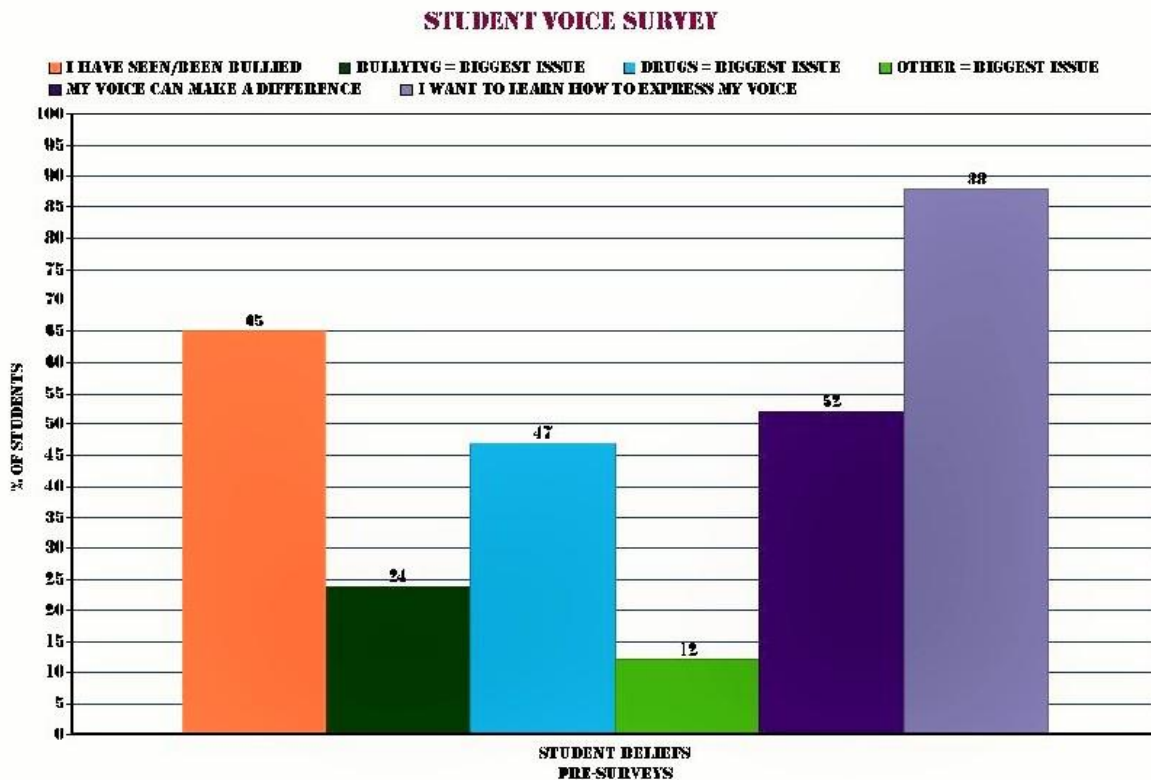
Lastly, in December and May, the students' work was shown at local galleries in the Downtown Arts District. The students who were able to attend were greatly encouraged by the experience. They heard feedback from community members, and they got to see how the process of creating is celebrated in our city!

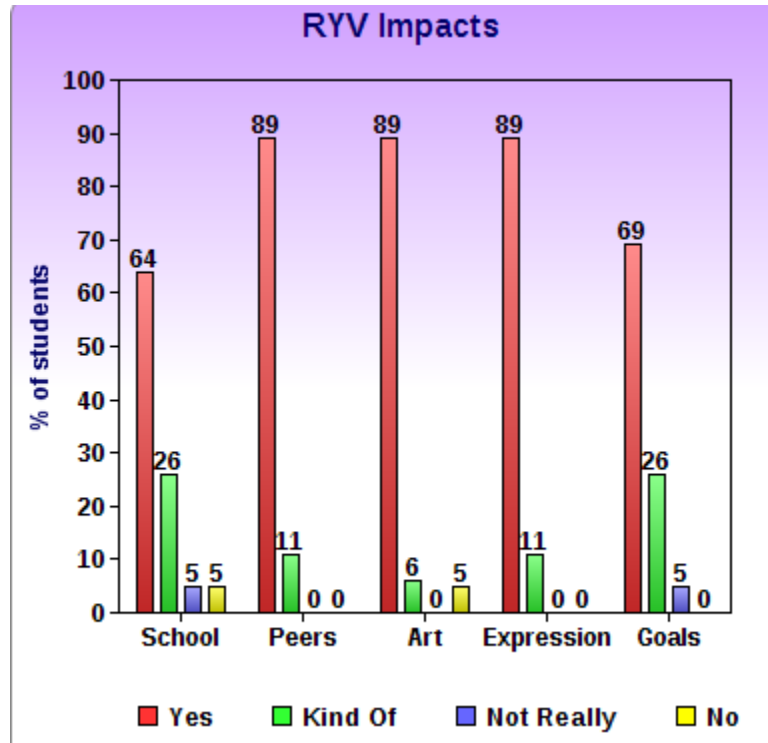
### 3. Other Areas of Life

**A. Finding a place to Fit:** In the Student Belief Graph, we hear the students say that more than half of the students do not know that their voice matters, but we also see the longing and desire to learn where their voice fits in their community! The teachers and students noticed that students are finding their place, their voice through RYV. This is even helping some find where they fit in their future, in the community (Samantha's Story).

Community was a natural repercussion of the workshops because the students invited friends and connected with each other in a very real way about their true ideas and stories.

**Conclusion:** *RYV helped students not only find their voice within their environment, but see how their voice connects to other areas of their life.*





*"Hi, my name is Samantha. I've been a part of Raise Your Voice for quite some time. Raise Your Voice has helped me discover new things I thought I wasn't able to do. Raise Your Voice helped me be open minded, up to new things all around us. When Ms. Deaver had Sean come into class last year to tell us about the starting of Raise Your Voice, how they will help s like myself to find our voice. I did. I found my voice, my inner strength. I've been journaling for almost a whole year on March 27th of this year. I love to write and Raise Your Voice has helped me figure that out. Thank You Raise Your Voice for being on board with us. It's been a fun journey. I've inspired 3 other people to do journaling to, I feel important in some kind of way, I really do. If I never meet you guys, I still wouldn't know what to do with my future. I am going to be a journalist, and a English Teacher , in honor of Ms. Deaver thanks to you all again, keep doing what you're doing RAISE YOUR VOICE !!!!!!"*





***B.Expression through Discovery:***

We heard from many students that they have connected with new tools and have enjoyed that discovery process. Not only so, but that discovery process also helped most of the students learn how to express more of themselves, their true perspective, thoughts, ideas, through these artistic tools.

**Conclusion:** *RYV has helped students connect to new tools and to themselves in a valuable way.*



*"I joined PhotoVoice because having a program where I was able to capture memories and have fun with art was important to me. I had the opportunity to share my feeling and art with the world and that make me feel important. I got to meet new people and go to events, it was all very inspiring." Carol*

*"I joined PhotoVoice because I've always been intrigued by photography. When I heard about the RYV part I became even more interested and kept coming back because I enjoyed the creativity. Jacklyn*

*"Raise your voice is important to me because growing up I was a lonely kid with an imagination that everyone even teachers could see. But I never really had time to do anything creative or even had the tools. Thanks to Raise Your Voice I was given the time, the tools, and the space I need to draw something beautiful or write something inspiring or heart-warming."*  
Taurusz



*"RYV helped me to express things that I wanted to say and that I wanted others to hear about. Everyone should be able to say positive things and share positive messages."* Braulio

*"I continued coming to RYV because I normally take a lot of photographs and here I learned that there are many different ways to use photography."* Brenda

### ***C.Community building!***

Part of having a voice on-campus includes making it a better place. These students connected with each other, invited and supported each other in their creative journey. The RYV space became automatic safe space for students to connect through their expressions. Because of this, they got to hear more of each other's stories and connect in a unique way.

**Conclusion:** *RYV invites students to build community because it provides safe space.*

*"In PhotoVoice I liked seeing everyone's artistic vision. This helped in developing my own."* Odalis



*"I came because my friend brought me. I liked doing the wheat paste project and enjoyed being a part of something."*  
Diana

## Raise Your Voice Project

*"I came to PhotoVoice because I was interested in photography. Here I learned how to put it with other types of art which made it even more fun. I liked that you can learn from other students so I hope more student will come in the future." Mercedes*



RYV also did a Spring Lunch Event where the Photo Voice and Mural Crew invited students to engage through interactive art! This really allowed us to connect with new students and for them to see the value of their voice to their peers. Because of these unique invitations, new students joined RYV and realized that those creative interests and passions are valued at their school! While the Mural Crew painted their mural design, Photo Voice invited their peers to "raise their voice" by writing on a black board something that they care about!



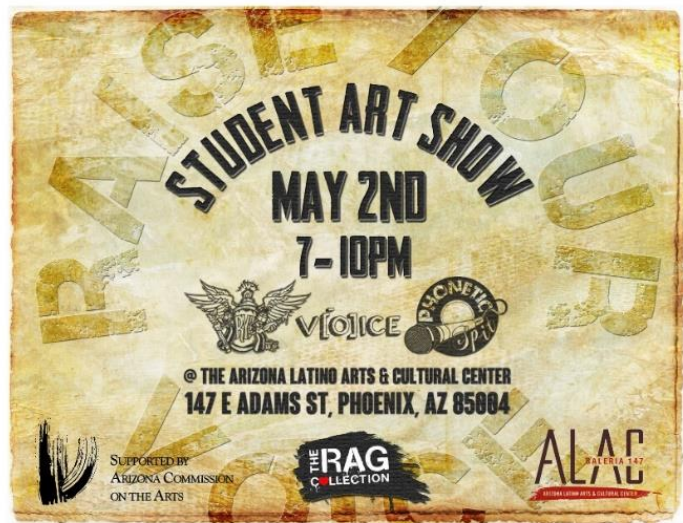


#### **A. Synthesis + Findings + Outcomes**

##### **1. Creative Work: Mural Crew Art for Student Exhibition**

*“Beginning”* - Many of the students didn't really have an idea of what they wanted to say at the beginning, which is why we provided some themes to help them begin. Most of them joined because they were interested more in the media. As they began to learn more and more skills and build trust with the art leaders, they began to say many deep things about their lives, their stories, and their futures. This was powerful to watch unfold.

The art was meaningful, not simply pretty 😊.



## Raise Your Voice Project

Innovation – Because of the field trip, a couple students asked about wheat-pasting. We made room in the workshop to try it together and it was something we will probably continue!

Another instance of innovation occurred when we asked the students involved in Phonetic Spit if they would be interested in a songwriting class during summer school. Since there were a few students who wrote songs, they said yes and one completed her first song during the summer.

*Image of song performance by student at student celebration showing for Summer Session. (right)*



### Empowerment + Opportunity -

One student from the PhotoVoice workshop actually performed a couple poems at the December Art Showing, which shocked all of us. She was the shyest person in the room and we didn't see that coming. Of course we welcomed her desire to share another piece of expression with us. The following semester, she took it upon herself to encourage one of her peers to perform.



## 2. Outcomes/Results:

*Student Art Showing:* Before students saw their art hung on the wall, they were nervous. Once they saw their art up on the gallery wall and experienced seeing how people from the community interacted with it, they started talking with more confidence about their artwork! They realized their perspective was important to others in the community.

### *RYV On-going School*

*Exhibit:* The principal of Alhambra offered on-going art space for the student each semester to show their art on campus in public spaces. The students were given a few choices as to where to hang it, and they chose the Library.



*Storytelling:* At the beginning of the workshops students were hesitant and shy and didn't really know what they had to say. Near the middle of each semester, they started speaking boldly about specific themes, topics, and issues that were important to them. They learned some specific tools to say what they wanted to say, and value their own perspective.



**Future Goals:** Students talked about dreams and goals they have for the future, including how they intend to continue to express themselves with the arts. This is very important because they value themselves in a new way – a holistic way that integrates with many other areas of life, other goals!

**Community:** Students that didn't know each other prior to this workshop united and worked together on projects. New friendships and alliances were built in the workshop spaces because of the experience they shared.

## DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

### 1. Future Plans/Changes:

**Integration** Phonetic Spit will be doing a workshop in 2 English classes this Fall, a sophomore and senior class. We will also be measuring these classes against two other non-integrated classes to see how this workshop affects motivation in other areas of life, grades, and attendance. This will be an 8 week workshop and will include inviting students to attend the All-City Slam in November.

**Lunch Events** RYV will be hosting a Lunch Event each semester to intentionally invite students who may not realize these workshops are available on campus, or may want to join but wonder if it is too late.

Field Trips RYV will take all the workshops on two fieldtrips, one each semester. These will be paid for by the school. Having one last year was very powerful, but we found that having that extra connection to the arts community was a huge source of inspiration.

Collaborative Workshop Sessions: RYV will be bringing all the workshops together for a collaborative session, storytelling, and art-making each semester! We talked about doing this last year, but didn't have time to make a concrete plan, but the youth were excited about the idea of seeing the other workshops create and work together more. This is part of our curriculum plan for the year now.

## 2. Limitations

Fall Phonetic Spit 8<sup>th</sup> hour integrated workshop – This workshop was invited into an 8<sup>th</sup> hour class where the students could decide how they were going to engage in learning in new ways. This was very exciting for us to be a part of at the beginning, as the students were enthusiastic about Phonetic Spit. However, this workshop had the biggest challenge due to the lack of communication and planning with the teacher of the 8<sup>th</sup> hour class that we were partnered with. It started off well, but as the sessions continued, the teacher was more and more distant and less communicative. Finally, as the semester ended, the teacher wouldn't respond to any artists or the project director. This was frustrating and disappointing as so many students enjoyed the workshop, and we weren't able to survey the students at the end.

This coming year, we will be integrating Phonetic Spit with one of the sponsor teachers, Ms. Deaver, whom we have excellent communication with and have already created a plan for the Fall Semester. She has been a strong supporter from the very beginning.

Access- All year, we have had students visit our workshop for the first 10-15 minutes, but let us know they can't attend due to family responsibilities. It is amazing to see the interest of the students, but hard to hear that so many have so many responsibilities to bear at home.

Also, some students had night school on top of day school. This is a burden we could see in their faces as they talked. We are hopeful that integrated workshops will allow some of these students access to these creative outlets and opportunities in ways they normally wouldn't be able to enter or engage.

Communication: We had some learning curves in getting various lines cleared so people knew what we were doing. These are areas we are addressing at the forefront this coming year.

- \*Security Guards had to be reminded not to hurry students away from us after school.
- \* Teachers were not adequately kept in the loop about the assembly we invited them to as we had discussed with the administration.
- \* The 8<sup>th</sup> hour integration teacher was not available for feedback like we asked.
- \* A new collaboration event in the Spring semester with Alhambra started by The Leadership Academy included us at the beginning, but did not follow through with details for RYV students to engage.