



EVALUATION REPORT 2022-23

GLOWING UP

Spy Hop's creative community helps youth flourish now and into the future



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



This report is a result of the research-practitioner partnership of:



Spy Hop Productions
208 West Harvey Milk Blvd.
SLC, UT 84101
info@spyhop.org



Convergence Design Lab, Chicago
<https://convergencedesignlab.org/>

Convergence Design Lab (CDL) is a woman-owned, full-service social impact agency working at the convergence of research, strategy, and design. CDL applies JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) principles to all that we do.

GLOWING UP: Youth Flourish Now and into the Future Through Creative Community (Spy Hop 2022-23 Evaluation Report)

Research and evaluation by Convergence Design Lab

Written by: Mindy Faber with Dennis Pierce

Edited by: Dennis Pierce

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This report stands as a testament to the unwavering support and generosity of the remarkable individuals at Spy Hop, whose leadership, staff, and mentors graciously welcomed the Convergence Design Lab research team into their spaces, hearts, and minds. A heartfelt appreciation extends to the Spy Hop alumni and youth participants whose candid and courageous insights enriched our understanding immeasurably.

I extend gratitude to my partner, Convergence co-founder and Director of Learning, Margaret Conway, whose profound understanding of learning dynamics, both among young people and adults, imbues every page of this study with depth and insight.

Lastly, I want to honor the countless individuals dedicated to advancing the fields of youth media and digital literacy for your work promoting equity, justice, voice, and opportunity for young people through transformative learning experiences.

—Mindy Faber,
Co-Founder and Executive Director
Convergence Design Lab



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FOREWORD



KASANDRA VERBRUGGHEN,
Executive Director, Spy Hop

On behalf of Spy Hop's staff, Board of Directors, and the young people we serve, I am excited to present Spy Hop's 2022-23 biennial Evaluation Report, authored by Convergence Design Lab (CDL). Spy Hop has been evaluating the impact of its programs on youth learning and growing since 2004. We are grateful for the partnership we have had with CDL since 2017 and appreciate their level of deep engagement, analysis and reflection on our work. It enables us to deepen our own knowledge and draw upon their findings and recommendations for program design and strategic planning.

As I read through this report, I am struck by how clearly the voices and experiences of our current and past students breathe through each page. Our logic model lays an ambitious set of proximal, intermediate and long-term goals, but the four findings laid out in this report details how the goals are being met in vivid detail and depth. I am immensely proud of the investment we have made in the professional growth of our teaching artists. I am also grateful to our dynamic board and staff for shepharding our transformation into an active anti-racist organization. I believe the findings reflect these efforts. Most of all, I am in awe of the young people we serve, their resilience, their creativity and integrity. I am confident that Spy Hop is indeed enabling youth to flourish now and into their futures.



MINDY FABER, Researcher
Convergence Design Lab

This report is the culmination of a close and deeply gratifying research-practitioner partnership between Spy Hop and Convergence Design Lab. I am profoundly appreciative of Spy Hop for welcoming us into their vibrant community and granting us broad access to the inner workings of its truly dynamic programs.

At Convergence, we deeply believe in listening to the voices of young people not only through surveys but also through the personal stories they share, the work they produce, their interactions with peers and mentors, and how they interpret their own experiences. To that end, two critically important bodies of data were drawn upon to inform the key findings in *Glowing Up*, which were the direct results of Convergence's research-practice partnership with Spy Hop — one focused on the "Now" and the other on the "Future". Firstly, class discussion recordings led by mentors, called Youth Reflection Podcasts, provided Convergence with rare access to class culture and youth interactions from current students. Focus groups and interviews with 11 program alumni were organized by Spy Hop and provided researchers with deep insights into Spy Hop's enduring and long-term impact on youth participants.

We learned how positive identity, media art and literacy skills, and belonging to a diverse cultural community generate profound shifts in youth mindsets and capacities, and that these impacts persist into adulthood in unexpected ways. At its core, this report tells the enduring and multi-generational impact story of Spy Hop's after-school programs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The popular culture term 'Glowing Up' embodies the essence of this report. It symbolizes the journey of Spy Hop students as they gain pride in their personal and creative growth by using media to discover and speak their own truths. This process of coming into their own—"glowing up"—proves resilient against the backdrop of prevalent social challenges.

While being a teenager has never been easy, today's young people—the teens near the end of the generation we call Gen Z—feel isolated and especially anxious about their lives, research suggests. And with good reason: They've come of age during a global pandemic, and with existential crises such as climate change, gun violence, and the proliferation of automation and AI making headlines, they face a complex and uncertain future.

Successfully navigating this future and solving large global challenges will require skills such as creative problem-solving, teamwork, and resilience—and these are the very same skills that youth who participate in Spy Hop programming acquire. But future success also requires them to cultivate trusting social relationships and connections with peers and strong adult role models who challenge and support their growth and development.

The findings described in this report show that young people participating in Spy Hop's after-school programs encounter a nurturing creative community that encourages them to become their "best selves." Teens are trusted as emerging professional artists whose voices, stories, and art can meaningfully contribute to culture, community, and social discourse.

Taught by professional media artists using state-of-the-art tools, Spy Hop students gain durable, lifelong skills by being encouraged to work not merely as members of a team, but as cooperative members of an interdependent community who engage in creative problem solving and critical reflection around a collective purpose.

Current students and alumni alike describe Spy Hop as a space where they interact with others who share similar interests and values, but also encounter people with diverse backgrounds and experiences. While creating films, games, music, and audio works for real-world audiences, Spy Hop participants build connections that are meaningful, impactful, and lasting, increasing their cultural fluency and social-emotional wellness. Indeed, students and alumni credit their Spy Hop mentors and class experiences as instrumental in cultivating their ability to listen and engage with one another as well as the broader community—skills that prepare them to navigate diverse environments with greater understanding and empathy.

By taking part in Spy Hop programming, youth are developing skills that will help them succeed both now and in the future. This process of coming into their own—"glowing up"—proves resilient against the backdrop of prevalent social challenges. Notably, the opportunities to become part of a creative community afforded by Spy Hop yield lasting impacts, laying the groundwork for youth to flourish through the challenges of adolescence and complex times, poised to make meaningful contributions to society throughout their lifetimes.

As articulated by one Spy Hop mentor, "Yes, we teach youth media, but in the end, we aim to make better humans."

Gen Z: Plugged In, Diverse, Concerned & Challenged by the Times

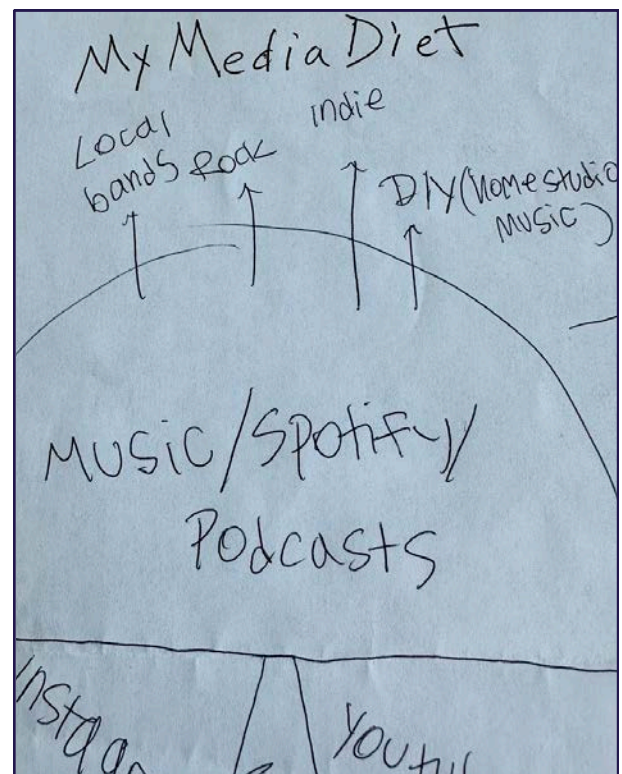
Plugged In

As a result, many young people have a level of technical proficiency, fluency and adaptability that prepares them well for future occupations. Gen Z'ers are self-sufficient learners who rely often on metacognition to pursue answers to questions on their own, rather than relying on school and teachers. YouTube is the most widely popular platform among Gen Zers for learning, entertainment, and information-seeking purposes. Up to 80% of young people turn to YouTube tutorials to learn new skills, find solutions to problems, and explore their interests.

The youth participants featured in this evaluation report, born after 2003, not only embrace digital technology but also grew up with smartphones constantly at their fingertips, with no memory of a world devoid of digital devices.

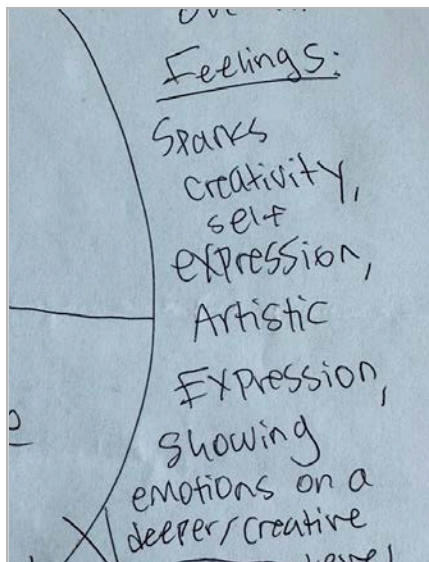
According to a 2020 Pew American Life survey, the majority of today's teens report being "online almost constantly." This trend holds true for the Spy Hop students interviewed for this evaluation study, who engage often with platforms such as YouTube, music streaming channels, Instagram, and gaming sites—even during school hours.

In focus groups led by Convergence evaluators, Spy Hop youth were asked to sketch out their daily "media diet." This teen depicts her daily intake much like a nutritional macro chart divided between platforms, media and genres to represent the percentages of time spent across platforms and experiences. Note how she identifies the content as well identifying alternative cultural styles such as "indie, local and DIY styles"



Gen Z: Plugged In, Diverse, Concerned & Challenged by the Times (cont.)

Diverse, Concerned and Challenged by the Times



DIVERSE

Gen Z represents the forefront of the country's evolving racial and ethnic composition. Even in Utah, where 88% of the population is white, half of Spy Hop students in 2023 identify as racial or ethnic minorities. Growing up in a more interconnected world, they are increasingly more representative and accepting of people from diverse backgrounds, races, and sexual and gender identities.

CONCERNED

Coming of age within movements like climate activism, gun control advocacy, and social justice causes, Gen Z has demonstrated a strong commitment to making a positive impact on the world. They are not just passive consumers of information but active creators and sharers of content that reflects their values and beliefs.

CHALLENGED BY THE TIMES

To understand the full impact of Spy Hop programming, it's helpful to grasp the societal context in the youth participants have grown up—including the challenges they face and the skills and attributes they'll need to thrive in an increasingly complex world.

Despite having a strong entrepreneurial spirit and a drive for autonomy, Gen Zers in Spy Hop's after-school media arts classes regularly encounter structural and societal challenges that significantly impact their mental wellness, and prospects for healthy civic and community engagement. This is what drives the high demand for Spy Hop's programs in the Utah region from parents, schools, and community partners.



ABOUT SPY HOP'S PROGRAMS

Spy Hop's after-school classes provide hands-on media arts training taught by professional artists. Young people attending the program engage in collaborative projects, critical reflections, and skill development in various media arts disciplines, including but not limited to filmmaking, sound engineering, radio and music production, and graphic/game design.

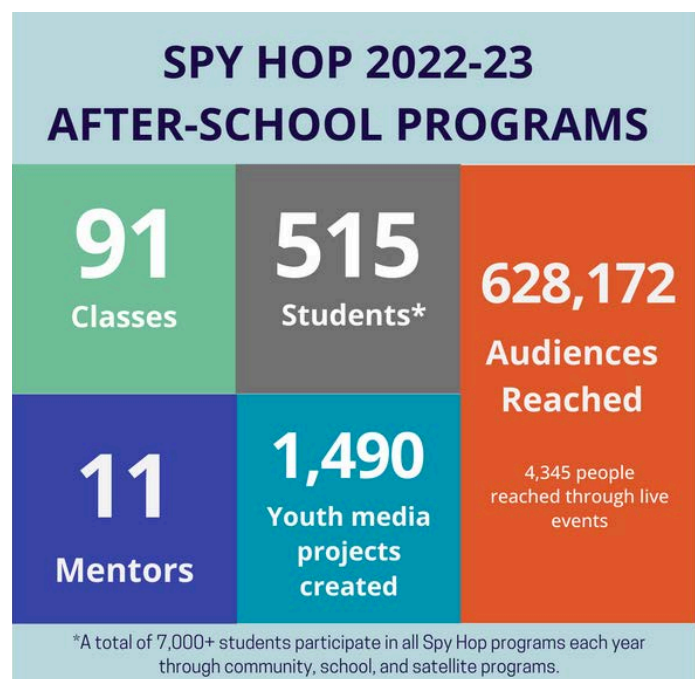
Class offerings are scaffolded across skill levels, ranging in dosage and duration so that students have opportunities to level up over time and explore new media forms and disciplines during their teen years.

Apprenticeships occur over a Spring, Summer or Fall 3-4 month session. Advanced classes such as PitchNic, Musicology and Power Up last 12-15 months. All classes are taught by full-time professional teaching artists at the Kahlert Youth Media Center in Salt Lake City, a state-of-the-art facility located in Central Ninth close to public transportation.

PROGRAM REACH AND IMPACT

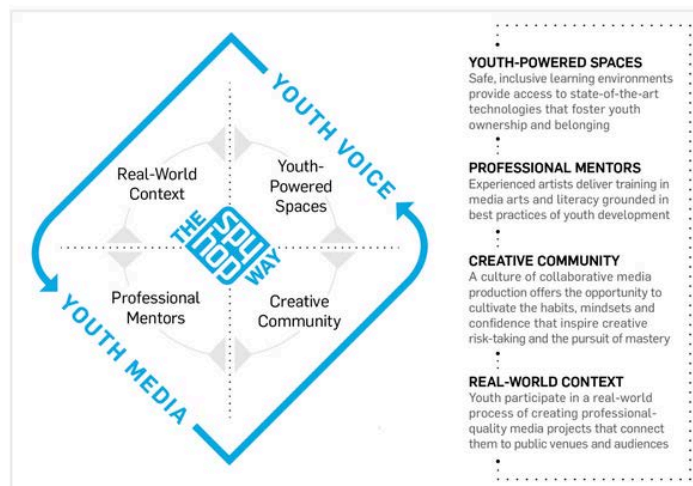
While this two-year evaluation report focuses on research gathered from Spy Hop's after-school programs serving primarily young people aged 14-20 from 2022-23, it is notable that Spy Hop also delivers classes in media arts to over 7,000 students annually (aged 9 to 20) across Utah through both in-school and out-of-school programs. These youth participants represent diverse races, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, religions, genders, and sexual orientations. 55% of its students are ages 16-17 and speak 16 languages, including Arabic, ASL, Chinese, English, Spanish, and more. 41% come from households earning less than \$50,000 annually.

In the 2022-2023 school year, Spy Hop served 7,054 students from over 70 schools, 51% male, 25% female, and 24% gender diverse; 52% belong to racial/ethnic minorities.



THE SPY HOP WAY

Spy Hop delivers a consistent set of practices, values, and resources that work together to elevate youth voices through media creation. As a theory of action, the following four components have come to be known as The Spy Hop Way. Survey data on youth experiences and perspectives shows strong evidence that these components are achieved across multiple indicators. (For an in-depth description of the Spy Hop Way, see the 2020-2021 Evaluation Report.)



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

KEY FINDINGS

The following key findings are based on two years of qualitative and quantitative research conducted by Convergence Design Lab.



- 1** Spy Hop's youth-centered and interest-driven approach enables young people to build media arts and literacy skills while also gaining confidence and self-efficacy.
- 2** Spy Hop empowers young people to discover their voice, build a creative identity, and express themselves authentically and boldly through media art.
- 3** Spy Hop's experiential approach to media arts equips youth with a deep set of durable skills, setting the stage for future success in post-secondary education and careers.
- 4** Spy Hop provides a secure and inclusive "third space"—outside of school and home—where young people join a diverse cultural community, fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness among peers and trusted adults.



KEY FINDING 1

Spy Hop's youth-centered and interest-driven approach enables young people to build media arts and literacy skills while also gaining confidence and self-efficacy.

I really enjoyed Spy Hop for the fact that it didn't feel like school. You were learning potentially just as much or more, [but] you were doing real-world things. We were making films for real companies or real organizations.

— Spy Hop alumnus

YOUTH GAIN FLUENCY IN MEDIA ARTS AND DIGITAL LITERACY

Spy Hop's after-school classes significantly improve participants' media arts and literacy skills. For a teenager with an interest in film, music, design, or radio, to enter into a Spy Hop class for the first time is to be accepted immediately as someone who belongs there, no questions asked. It's a cool creative club where mentors join with youth in "solidarity" around a joint enterprise, says Adam Sherlock, Spy Hop's Director of Learning Engagement.

Spy Hop elevates youth as proficient media creators through intensive, hands-on training and mentoring in a variety of disciplines. Students are taught by practicing professional artists using state-of-the-art tools and facilities.

This access to authentic equipment and mentors positions youth media makers as early professionals instead of merely students. It instills a sense of responsibility, agency, and empowerment, as youth participants are entrusted with tasks and responsibilities typically reserved for professionals in their fields.

The treatment of students as professional artists contributes significantly to their growth and development by fostering a sense of accountability and autonomy as they experiment and create their own projects. It cultivates a passion for media arts and facilitates a lifelong disposition as content creators, communicators, and meaning makers.

Mentors are not just teaching artists; they are practicing professionals. "They still have their own passion projects and are invested in the arts," Sherlock says. As a result, mentors see students as emerging professionals in the making, and students, in turn, perceive mentors not only as trusted and caring adults but as creative guides and role models. Mentors deliver on this promise. On day one of any Spy Hop class, students get their hands on professional equipment and tools as they work within modern, cutting-edge facilities. Whether it's a four-week class, a four-month apprenticeship, or a year-long capstone project, all students emerge from the program with independent and collaborative media works that are presented to public audiences.

ENHANCED TECHNICAL SKILLS

Through surveys, focus groups, direct observation, and portfolio reviews, we found that participants

demonstrated considerable growth in their technical skills and creative abilities in various media arts disciplines such as filmmaking, music, design, and sound/audio/radio production. Participants showed increased proficiency in using digital tools and software, as well as understanding and employing media arts techniques to convey messages effectively. (Table 1)

Through surveys, focus groups, direct observation, and portfolio reviews, we found that participants demonstrated considerable growth in their technical skills and creative abilities in various media arts disciplines such as filmmaking, music, design, and sound/audio/radio production. Participants showed increased proficiency in using digital tools and software, as well as understanding and employing media arts techniques to convey messages effectively. (Figure 1)

Students themselves perceived significant growth in their skills across multiple areas. In a 2023 Design Apprenticeship class, students were asked to rate their skills in design before joining the class and again once the class had finished. (Figure 2) The overall percentage of students who rated their skills as "Accomplished" or "Highly Accomplished" increased from 28% before the start of the class to 87% after.

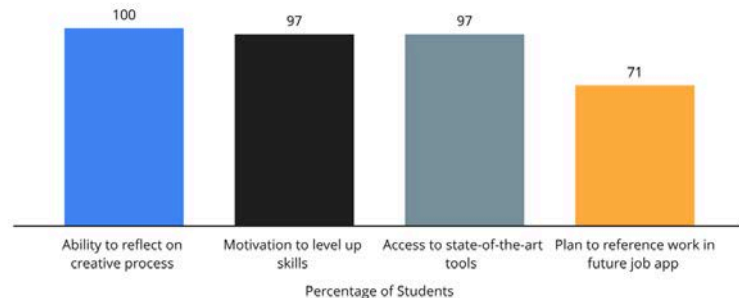
It gives you so much more knowledge than the average person would have. They would have to go to college to touch all this equipment and it prepares you for the industry.

— Audio App Student

Figure 1

Growth in Creative and Tech Skills

Key Indicators



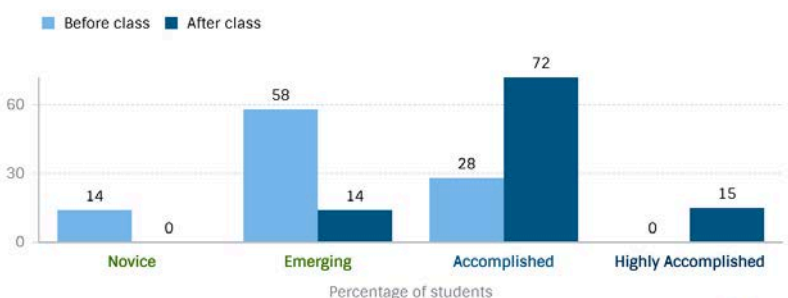
Source: Spy Hop Design Apps Class Survey, 2023



Figure 2

Growth in Sense of Accomplishment

2023 Design Apprenticeship Students



Source: Spy Hop End of Class Survey



CONFIDENCE AND PRIDE

The technical proficiency that students develop leads to gains in their confidence and a sense of self-accomplishment. For instance, participants in a 2022-23 Musicology class reflected on their journey from initial apprehension to newfound confidence in their creative and technical abilities.

One student recounted how his initial fear of performing on stage gradually transformed into anticipation and excitement over time. “I was super nervous to perform on stage,” he said, “but throughout this program, it got easier, and I actually looked forward to performing.” He attributed this shift to the consistent practice he received and the growth in his ability as a result: “I didn’t really like my voice before, [but] I’m taking the voice lessons and I’m getting more confident, and that’s all a big thing.”

Several Musicology students believed that confronting their fears and being pushed outside their comfort zone was essential for their growth. One participant remarked, “Just being in front of a crowd was so jarring at first, and now it feels almost comfortable.”

Another student echoed similar sentiments, noting: “I have gotten astronomically more confident in my voice and my [musical] abilities, like learning the bass.” She credited the program for demanding excellence, stating, “When you get here, you have to give 100%. You’re putting everything into music and you’re putting everything into working with these people, which is really difficult on a bad day. But now that’s what I’m going to miss so much.”

When you get here, you have to give 100%. You’re putting everything into music and you’re putting everything into working with these people.

— Musicology Student

CRITICAL QUESTIONING AND MEDIA LITERACY

Aside from enhanced technical proficiency in various media disciplines, students also exhibit a deeper understanding of how media is used to construct meaning, convey stories, and shape perceptions. Through the act of making media, Spy Hop participants cultivate critical media literacy and civic online reasoning (Breakstone et al.), enabling them to analyze and evaluate media messages and understand the impact of media on society.

Ninety-four percent of students across all after-school classes in 2022-23 agreed that the classes empowered them to think more critically about media and how it’s made. Given that a 2021 Stanford University study revealed today’s teens are largely ill-equipped to detect fake news online, the media literacy skills that Spy Hop participants develop are essential in helping young people navigate an increasingly complex media environment and become savvy consumers of information.

In one 2023 Design Apprenticeship class, 91% of students reported experiencing “much” or “transformative” growth in their ability to think critically and ask questions about new concepts in media and art. As one student put it, “I look

and I notice things that I know I didn't notice before." Another says, "I've noticed myself analyzing advertisements more."

In fact, being involved with Spy Hop and learning various media production skills has changed the way young people consume media. One young woman believes that her media consumption diet has become "healthier" since coming to Spy Hop. She says she finds corporate media to be "soulless" in contrast to the media art she is making with others at Spy Hop. Several youth describe how they find themselves digging deeper into questions about how media is made and noticing different aspects of its production, such as lighting, production design, and the roles of various crew members.

Students described their ability to speak and understand the language of the discipline they studied as a kind of "superpower" that helps them stand out and prepares them for a future role they envision for themselves. "You feel really cool about it," one student noted, "because it almost feels like you've evolved ... like I am capable of change." Another calls this level of knowledge to be "empowering" because it "prepares you for the world more."

PROFESSIONAL TREATMENT AND AUTONOMY

Both students and alumni talked about how Spy Hop gave them a unique opportunity to be treated as emerging professional artists rather than simply as students. "One of my favorite parts about [Spy Hop] was being treated almost like an early professional," said one alumnus, who contrasted that with the high school experience—where you're there "solely to learn."

[Spy Hop] made me feel like my ideas and my personality were something that were valuable.

— Spy Hop Alumnus

At Spy Hop, "they gave you the responsibility that a professional might have, not on a full scale but still like a professional." Another alumnus concurred, noting: "These are adults who took me seriously."

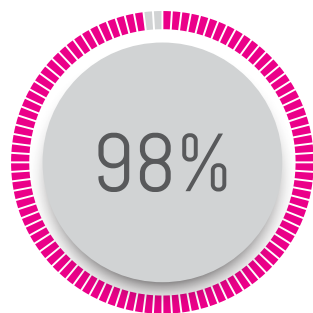
This shift in how young people are positioned instills a sense of empowerment, as they're entrusted with tasks and responsibilities typically reserved for practicing artists in their respective fields. It fosters accountability, autonomy, and self-worth—and it contributes to a growth mindset and a strong sense of agency. "You can just figure things out," one participant said. "They kind of give you the opportunity to make your own thing, which is cool."

A former student, who emigrated to the United States as a young person, described how a lack of self-confidence held him back as a teenager: "I felt like I didn't have any strengths to become a productive member of society and to earn money for my family. Those were ... the stressors I was dealing with when I joined Spy Hop." He credits his exposure to encouraging mentors and opportunities to use technology to create music as "what changed me." Being at Spy Hop, he said, "made me feel like my ideas

and my personality were something that were valuable." This former student is now an engineer and is helping to provide for his family.

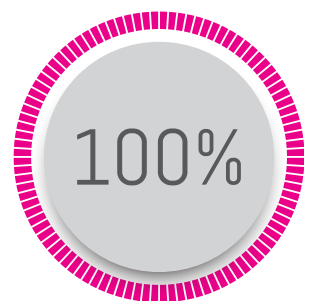
Describing how resilient she became when she was "set loose" to try new things and "fail but learn as a result," another Spy Hop alum concluded: "I can do hard stuff."

AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT



98% of youth participants are highly satisfied with their Spy Hop class.

Source: Hello Insight Pre/Post Surveys 2022-23 (n. 111)



When asked what program experiences accounted for their program satisfaction, 100% identified "Engaging Authentically" as the No. 1 factor.

Source: Hello Insight Pre/Post Surveys 2022-23 (n. 111)

In Convergence Design Lab's research, Spy Hop students described authentic engagement around the following key themes:

- (1) real-world production experiences;
- (2) opportunities to find one's voice through exploration of personal passions and interests;
- (3) being taught by mentors who are themselves professional media artists; and
- (4) presenting and publishing work for real-world audiences and venues.

“I feel like there are a lot of organizations that try to be cool and trendy with teenagers nowadays, but I just wanted to say that Spy Hop is not that, it's genuinely one of the coolest places I've ever been but safe and loving vibes from here. It's great.

—A Spy Hop participant

HOW IS AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT MEASURED?

Engage Authentically is a young person's experience with an adult who takes the time to get to know them by listening and understanding who they are — their cultural and lived experiences, their interests, and their passions. Engaging authentically involves placing young people's personal stories at the center of the program's work and ensuring that they feel valued, heard, and cared for by adults. This is a Foundational Experience for young people, or one that lays the groundwork for all of the others in Hello Insight's logic model.

—Hello Insight SEL Tool Guide

SPOTLIGHT

AUDIO APPRENTICESHIP: GROWTH AMPLIFIED



In a focus group, Audio Apprenticeship students beamed with pride as they talked about how they felt empowered in learning audio engineering skills—and how their newfound confidence has led to a greater sense of self-efficacy they will carry into their future.

Audio Apps is a repeatable audio engineering class where students receive stipends to produce and mix professionally for external clients. Several Audio Apps students attest to the tremendous gains the program instilled in their skills and confidence. “I feel like I took a college elective course every time I took it,” says one participant.

Another recent graduate describes how the program helped cultivate a sense of self-direction: “I’m now applying to colleges, and one of the best things that happened for me is that I was empowered to ... find certain programs in colleges that teach songwriting. I feel like I have the opportunity to ... get a job in a recording studio and continue doing what I’ve learned as a job.”

Students report that the exposure they received to new media forms and techniques has deepened their media knowledge and capacities. Despite having a good amount of musical training coming into Spy Hop, one Audio Apprenticeship student describes how the class opened him up to “a whole new world. I felt like I was only seeing half

of what I could do. There’s all this stuff that goes into making how it sounds in my head that I never considered.” He believes the Audio Apps class became “the stitching that tied everything together.”

Several of the Audio Apps students describe their growth in both confidence and competency as transformational. “I remember the first time I was like, ‘Whoa, that is not what I was not expecting at all.’ But by the end of it, I was like a completely different person,” one student said. “This is my second Audio Apps [class], and from where I started to where I’m at right now, it’s crazy how much I’ve learned.”

“

I would feel comfortable working in a recording studio.

—An Audio Apprenticeship student

”

HOME

PRESENTING

Resonant Studio Ra

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Vocal ... ay(he/him)

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KEY FINDING 2

Spy Hop empowers young people to discover their voice, build a creative identity and express themselves authentically and boldly through media art.

“

I really felt like a part of me was, like, lost. And then I found it, through this class, if that makes sense.

—A Loud and Clear student

”

Spy Hop offers a creative space and community where participants are encouraged to explore their interests freely and express themselves without constraints. Students learn to tackle issues and topics that are authentic and meaningful to their lives. By nurturing bold and brave expression, Spy Hop amplifies young voices in a variety of media disciplines that connect to youth culture. In the process, students are encouraged to take creative risks and explore topics, styles, and ideas that interest them.

The purpose-driven process of shaping narratives and messages that matter to youth helps them forge their creative identity, develop agency, and advocate for issues and ideas they feel strongly about.

Spy Hop's programs and classes are firmly grounded in a belief in “youth voice.” One student began taking Spy Hop classes early on in pre-adolescence and went on to engage in multiple audio and film classes throughout high school. When asked what it means to be a youth media artist, she replied, “The thing I think of is innovation and new ideas being spread. I feel like with every generation ... there comes more and more quality of thought.”

DISCOVERING THEIR VOICES

In our content analysis of samples from student portfolios from 2022-23, we found that many Spy Hop students are creating courageous works that tackle challenging social issues from deeply personal perspectives. These topics include LGBTQ+ rights, stigma and social exclusion, spirituality and religion, mental health, immigrant identity, climate change, body image, youth culture, intersectional identity, and online harassment.

Well beyond just expressing teen angst, a review of student films from PitchNic and Reel Stories classes revealed that many young filmmakers are also exploring their identities and social place in the world from diverse perspectives and on topics that often surprise family, friends, and community members.

“Finding oneself” is described as a validation of identity and one's capacity to be productive and creative. Spy Hop mentors encourage students to delve into genuine questions and topics that resonate with their lived experiences, a practice commonly referred to as fostering “authentic voice.” This approach empowers students to engage deeply with their own youth culture, drawing on popular media forms such as films, podcasts, radio, games, and music to push the boundaries of conventional storytelling and expression.

These immersive experiences are particularly significant for youth who might not have access to media arts opportunities outside of Spy Hop.

According to the young media artists in a November 2023 focus group, the students described their experience making media art as acts of innovation,

adaptation, and pushing the envelope. They felt motivated to bring new ideas and a fresh perspective to their work. They expressed a desire to take what previous generations have done and either improve upon it, spin it with their own twist, or address new problems that have emerged, such as climate change and hateful speech toward LGBTQ+ people.

Youth find meaning in storytelling and developing characters. They enjoy creating new worlds and using their work as a platform to share their ideas and expand upon them with others. For these youth media artists, being able to tell stories and give voice to ideas and movements is important. They also describe the importance of building a comfortable space where these ideas can be addressed without being hidden away.

YOUTH ADVOCACY

Gen Zers may be a bit more cautious politically than their Millennial counterparts and are reluctant to voice strong political views. But there is more going on beneath the surface—and they do, in fact, have strong views on issues that affect their identity and their future. These perspectives are given a space for expression in Spy Hop classes, resulting in media projects that address complex social and sensitive topics.

As this report was being compiled, state legislation in Utah has imposed restrictions on the rights of young individuals to use school bathrooms corresponding to their gender identity. Reflecting on this development, Spy Hop's Director of Learning Design, Adam Sherlock, remarked, "Our young people feel under attack."

For many Gen Z individuals, politics evoke feelings of powerlessness and negativity. "You can't make a

Children have fewer rights than almost any other group and fewer institutions protecting these rights. Consequently, their voices and needs are almost completely absent from the debates, policies, and legislative practices that are constructed in terms of their needs.

—Henry A. Giroux

change if it's just one person against the entire world," one Spy Hop student said, while another added, "If you look at the news, there's no good news. It's all bad news and I just feel negative." Lead mentor Liz Schulte observes: "It's like they've been crushed and they compartmentalize all their thoughts. They're like, 'Oh, you can't talk to that—you're too young to have real feelings about these topics.' That's how it feels to me like they're reacting."

While some adults may interpret these sentiments as apathy or disengagement, Schulte and her colleagues caution against such assumptions. Today's youth "have deep, rich feelings and thoughts about [politics]," she emphasizes. Their outward projection of guarded neutrality may stem from a need for self-protection.

Although students may appear reluctant to engage in overt discussions on current social issues, they possess a remarkable degree of self-awareness. Film mentor Jose (Pepe) Manzo observes, "You have all these Spy Hop kids who do not want to get political, but the thing is, their identity has become a political issue for who they are. Their identity has been politicized. So they have no other choice. They have to say things about it, because it's important."

Manzo highlights the interest among PitchNic students for creating films addressing climate change and its impact on the Great Salt Lake, stating, "It's a big deal, like almost every single

student we interview for PitchNic is thinking about making a film about it because it's something that they care about—and it's right here in their home state."

Echoing these sentiments, one student remarks, "I would never think about it as, 'Oh, I have to, like, change the world,' you know? But I feel like that's kind of the responsibility that is laid on us." PitchNic mentor Lauren Brucken agrees: "They won't just bring politics up until the floodgates open, and then it just pours out and there are those deep, rich feelings that are constantly there and constantly affecting their worldview."

"I think we can make a change. I think everybody can," asserts a Musicology student. Another adds, "I think that this generation is definitely very different from other generations, because we are all so connected through media. Because we were raised with media and we know how to talk to each other, we could definitely make some big changes—and I think we already have made a lot of big changes."

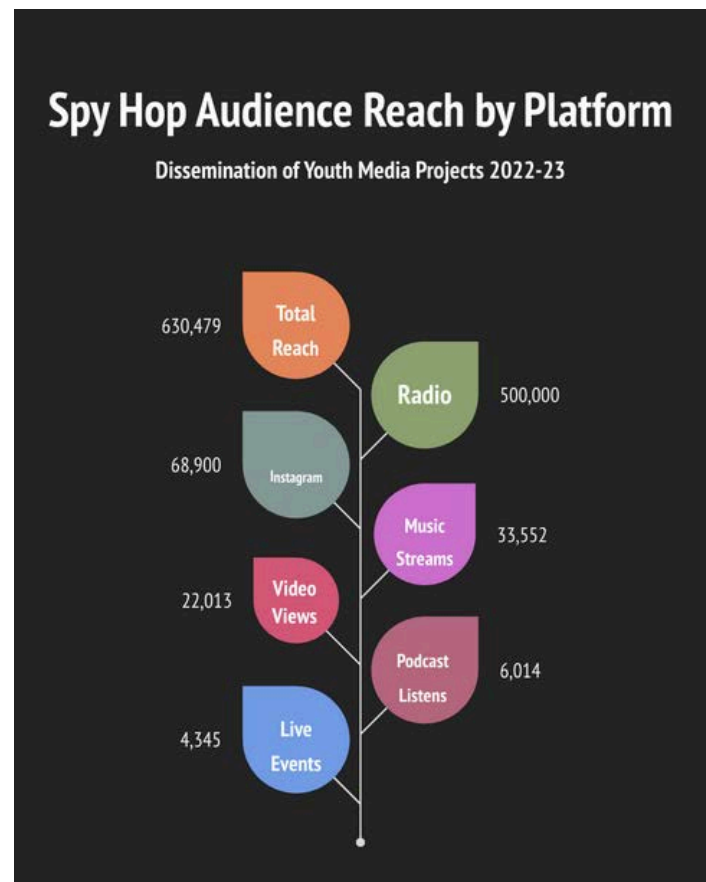
AGENCY THROUGH MAKING MEDIA

Education and media scholar Henry Jenkins has extensively researched the role of media in empowering youth. He argues that media literacy and engagement enable young individuals to critically analyze and interpret the world, express their voices, challenge dominant narratives, and advocate for change. Jenkins (2006) emphasizes the concept of participatory culture, where youth use digital media platforms to create, share content, and engage in civic and political activities.

Many young people lack the technology resources, media training opportunities, and access to trusting adults that can help them navigate complex digital

worlds. This is a key area where Spy Hop makes a difference.

Spy Hop's Brunken underscores the goal of Spy Hop mentors to foster agency and empowerment through media creation, stating, "I think it's learning technical stuff that makes [youth feel] empowered. They see, 'Okay, if I am eloquent and if I have high-quality stuff, I will be listened to. And my voice as a minority will be stronger.'"



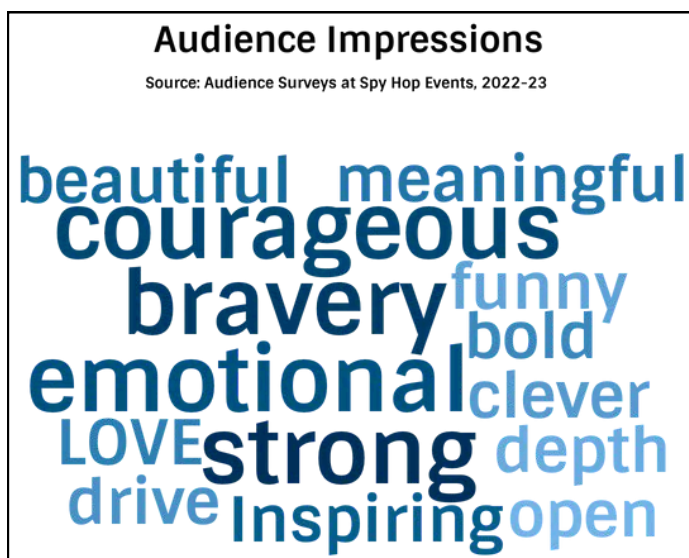
AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT AND RESPONSE

Spy Hop is committed to bringing youth media and youth voices to public audiences. This is part of what makes Spy Hop “authentic” to youth. Young people’s awareness that their work is shared with real-world audiences and community members motivates them to persevere through challenges and attempt mastery of their projects.

The time, money, and effort that Spy Hop expends on distribution and events is an expression of its commitment to advocacy. Spy Hop believes that it’s important to bring the experiences and perspectives of young people into the public sphere, where they can contribute to democratic dialogue.

It’s hard to attend a Spy Hop showcase of youth media work such as PitchNic, Heatwave, or Pixel Gallery without being deeply affected.

Based on completed surveys from 138 audience members attending PitchNic or Reel Stories screenings, 98% report being “surprised at the quality of the films,” 99% were “intrigued by the topics of the films” and “learned something new about youth perspectives and experiences,” and 98% agreed they were “personally moved by at least one of the films.” (Source: Reel Stories and PitchNic Audience surveys, n. 138.)





KEY FINDING 3

Spy Hop's experiential approach to media arts equips youth with a deep set of durable skills, setting the stage for future success in post-secondary education and careers.

I don't think ... that being part of the media arts industry is the only measure of success, because the tools and skills that we learn at Spy Hop are so transferable to really any industry.

—A Spy Hop alumnus

In Finding 1 of this report, we describe how students in Spy Hop's after-school classes learn valuable media arts and literacy skills while also growing in confidence. In Finding 2, we explore how Spy Hop youth develop creativity, cultivate authentic voices, and learn how to express themselves, leading to a strong sense of agency.

These skill sets are essential for navigating a complex media landscape, making meaning from experience, and advocating for change—all fundamental aspects of participating in a democratic society. Beyond these competencies, however, participants in Spy Hop programming also acquire so-called soft or "durable" skills such as collaborative problem solving, teamwork, resilience, and self-reflection. These skills position young people for success in any career path they might choose, whether that's media production or another field.

When asked what they're most proud of, many Spy Hop students mention their growth in technical proficiency. Yet, when alumni talk about what they learned from Spy Hop that has helped them the most in their careers, they describe the program's impact on their self-efficacy, citing their experiences in working with others to solve creative challenges.

These experiences have led to a growth mindset they've carried throughout their lives, helping them to become successful filmmakers, musicians, lawyers, engineers, and teachers, among other roles.

Some of the key experiences at Spy Hop that have an enduring impact on students include facing fears and taking creative risks; solving problems by tapping into the diverse perspectives of the group; and reflecting on and improving their work with the help of mentor and peer feedback.

DURABLE SKILLS IN HIGH DEMAND

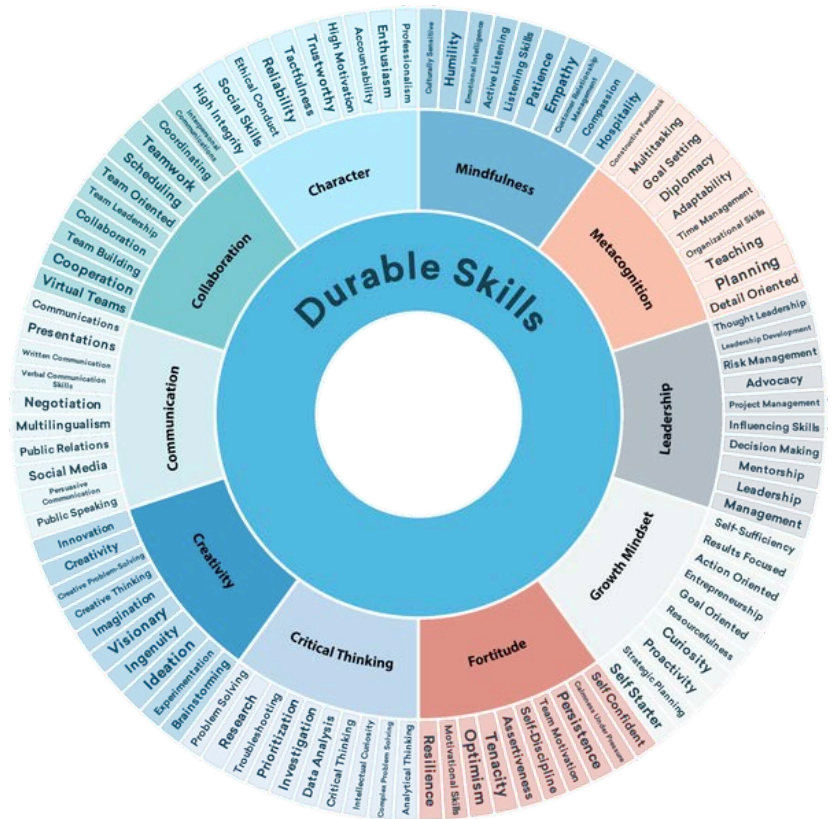
One of Spy Hop's goals is to prepare young people for the future of work so they can contribute to a more inclusive and diverse knowledge economy. Our evaluation suggests the program is meeting this goal. In post-class surveys, 98% of Spy Hop students report feeling more prepared for internships and jobs as a result of their experience.

The expansion of the "gig" economy, advancements in automation and AI, and other factors have propelled discussions about the skills today's youth will need for

success in jobs that have yet to be invented. Research conducted by the nonprofit America's Promise highlights the pivotal role of what the organization calls "durable skills" in fostering economic mobility, particularly for underserved and marginalized youth. The organization's Durable Skills Advantage Framework identifies a diverse set of competencies for future success, including innovation, a growth mindset, creativity, and leadership.

To arrive at these competencies, America's Promise conducted a study examining labor market keyword terms used across more than 80 million job postings. The organization found unequivocal evidence that durable skills are in high demand across numerous industries, occupational types, educational attainment levels, and geographical locations.

DURABLE SKILLS ADVANTAGE FRAMEWORK*



According to America's Promise:

- Durable skills rank among the top 10 most requested skills in job postings.
- The top five durable skills are requested nearly five times as frequently as the top five hard or technical skills.
- Leadership and communication emerged as the most sought-after durable skills competencies.

Skill Ranking	Durable Skill Keyword	Durable Skill Competency	# of U.S. Job Postings
1	Communications	Communication	22,770,549
2	Customer Service	Communication	17,187,192
3	Management	Leadership	16,933,506
4	Leadership	Leadership	15,539,695
5	Detail Oriented	Metacognition	10,997,835
6	Problem Solving	Critical Thinking	10,944,655
7	Planning	Metacognition	7,401,327
8	Presentations	Communication	6,968,422
9	Written Communication	Communication	6,966,321
10	Interpersonal Communications	Collaboration	6,053,156

EXPERIENTIAL AND PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Spy Hop's after-school classes help students develop these durable skills, and one of the key factors is the program's project-based curricula. This structure not only mirrors authentic, real-world scenarios in media arts careers; it also gives students opportunities to learn and practice the skills and mindsets that are essential for success in these and other fields.

Over seven years spent evaluating Spy Hop programs, our research consistently shows that experiential learning—or learning by doing—prepares students to navigate the complexities of future work, including communication, collaboration, creativity, and problem solving. We further see that the process of immersing oneself in purposeful and meaningful media art production often pushes young people beyond what they think they are capable of achieving. They are able to take risks through the support and feedback of both peers and mentors.

The benefits of experiential learning are long known. Learning philosophers from John Dewey in the early 20th century up to present-day Connected Learning researchers such as Mimi Ito, Carol Dweck, Paulo Freire, and David Kolb have studied the impact of experiential learning on child and adolescent development. Their research suggests that when knowledge is constructed socially and in the context of meaningful inquiry, it is more likely to be lifelong and transferable to other situations.

Yet, the impact of experiential learning at Spy Hop extends beyond the acquisition of content knowledge. In interviews and focus groups with 16 alumni, including graduates from up to 15 years ago, participants credit their experiences in collaborative and project-based creative endeavors

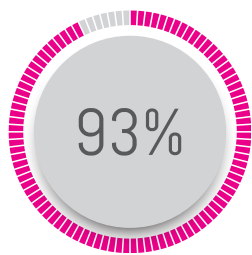
for their sense of self-efficacy and their belief in their ability to take risks, solve problems, and work well with others, even in complex or challenging situations.

This alumnus describes it like this, "I don't work in film anymore, but I think the self-starterness of Spy Hop ... like getting into stuff and figuring it out ... is definitely a useful skill that I continue to use in my life."

For me, it's a big soft skills thing that sticks about Spy Hop. ... The confidence and the ability to do teamwork and figure out problems and stuff like that is something I really carried into what I do now.
—Spy Hop alumnus



MEDIA ARTS EDUCATION AT SPY HOP: A COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE



93% of Spy Hop students surveyed in 2022-23 said their class helped improve their ability to collaborate with others as part of a team.

Spy Hop's after-school programs offer instruction in various media arts disciplines, including film, audio/sound, music, and design. As a largely collaborative art form, classes are structured around authentic, team-based creative production. While students are encouraged to cultivate their own unique voice, collaborating on projects, exchanging ideas, providing support, and giving and receiving critical feedback are experiences that are consistently baked into all classes.

In Musicology, students collaborate as a group of musicians and songwriters to compose, perform, and record songs like a rock band. Power Up, a game design class, assigns students distributed roles commonly found in the industry, such as designer, animator, and programmer, to collectively build a single game. In Loud and Clear, students function as deejays, refining their individual tastes and styles while collaboratively producing a cohesive episode each week for airing on the local public radio station. In Pitchnic, students form crews to work separately on four distinct films, assuming authentic roles like cinematographer and director.

The structure of collaboration in Spy Hop classes naturally aligns with industry practices relevant to each medium.

Adam Sherlock, Spy Hop's Director of Learning Experience, notes that the term "collaboration"

doesn't fully capture what happens when youth make media together. "It goes deeper than that," Sherlock says, noting that students need to be "in solidarity with each other" to create high-level media art collectively. This demands genuine engagement in the shared endeavor and a willingness to contribute to the collective goal, surpassing typical academic group work.

PUSHING PAST FEAR

In this and previous reports, we describe the "Spy Hop Push" as a strategy that mentors apply in challenging students to tap into their creative possibilities and produce their best work. However, students are also pushed by each other out of a shared sense of investment. The situational context of working collaboratively means that students often must work through their own discomfort and fear of failure.

As one design student explained:

"I remember the exercises at the beginning of the school year and struggling with them. But then ... I realized I didn't feel good letting one of my teammates carry the weight of doing everything on Illustrator themselves, so I sucked it up and tried my best."

Learning to be a cooperative member of a team, a process that often involves working past self-doubt and rising to the challenge, is a lifelong value that becomes instilled in Spy Hop participants.

As a recent PitchNic student writes, "I am very proud of myself for working towards something that I really wanted. In the past, I always let my fear of failing get in the way of my goals. I'm very happy that I was able to bring a script that I had been working on to life."

LEVERAGING STRENGTHS

Through collaborative creative practice, many individuals come to realize that their diversity and differences improve the final product. As this Musicology student tells her fellow bandmates, "It's cool how interesting the music becomes even when we all have such different music tastes. I wouldn't have thought it would work if you guys had described it to me, but it does."

Another alumnus puts it this way: "At Spy Hop, I learned that it's important to know your strengths and weaknesses and what others' strengths and weaknesses are, so that you all can round each other out and be prepared for things that come up ... to become a united front and present a unified voice."

COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

The Durable Skills Advantage Framework defines collaboration as "the ability to work harmoniously with others, leveraging diverse strengths and ideas to achieve common goals, and contribute positively to team dynamics and outcomes." However, students do not come into the program automatically knowing how to work "harmoniously" when collaborating. Collaborative problem-solving requires a process of communication and negotiation across creative differences, sophisticated social skills that can be cultivated over time through multiple experiences. At Spy Hop, youth are immersed in situations that require these competencies. When asked to describe what skills developed at Spy Hop have helped him in his career, one alumnus responded:

"More than just the technical side ... but on the soft skill side of things, like 'you have four hours to get this done and five people are disagreeing. How do

"I am very proud of myself for working towards something that I really wanted. In the past, I always let my fear of failing get in the way of my goals. I'm very happy that I was able to bring a script that I had been working on to life."

—PitchNic Student

you move forward and how do you execute the project?' Turns out in the professional world, it's the exact same way. I didn't know it at the time, but I think those experiences were equipping me for future work."

This process requires learning how to listen to other perspectives and to voice one's own, negotiating and working through disagreement to reach an understanding.

"One of the first bigger projects we worked on was hard for me, because I wasn't used to stating my opinion with confidence," one participant said. "I was afraid of what others might say if they didn't agree with me. By the end of the project, I learned to accept the fact that some people would not agree with me ..., but that isn't a problem and shouldn't be something to be afraid of."

A Video Apprenticeship student wrote about the difficulty of working with a peer during the editing process, but by agreeing that they should both have input, they were able to achieve consensus.

Students expressed pride and self-awareness about their growing ability to grapple with complex interactions and group dynamics. When asked what they were proud of, responses included:

Spy Hop students are proud of:

- Collaborating with others on creative projects.
- My ability to code with others.
- I learned how to listen critically and work with people.
- Working with peers, understanding that my creativity and voice has meaning.

REFLECTION AND REVISION

Media arts is an iterative process that relies on critical feedback and reflection to refine and improve works. Spy Hop mentors build discussion about creative projects into the class structure, with mentors modeling how to give and receive input honestly, respectfully, and thoughtfully.

One alum attributes the communication skills she uses in her job on a daily basis to her Spy Hop mentor, crediting him with helping her embrace failure as a pathway to improvement. She emphasizes the value of direct and honest feedback, stating, "I've had many, many difficult conversations in various positions, and I think having Matt as a mentor at Spy Hop really prepared me for that and how to handle it and not take it personally, to look at it as constructive criticism. ... It's meant to help you grow and become better at what you are striving to do."

Another alum who became a school teacher credits his Spy Hop mentor with his ability to give critical feedback to his students today: "It's definitely influenced [how] I work with and talk with youth ... to have very high expectations, but do everything in my power to get [them] there. He did it really well, and that's what I try to do, too."

PROCESS IS PRODUCT

One of the most fundamental lessons that Spy Hop participants learn is the importance of continuous reflection and growth.

The psychologist Carol Dweck's theory of growth mindset (2008) posits that individuals' beliefs about their abilities can significantly impact their behavior and success. A growth mindset is the belief that intelligence and abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work. In contrast, a fixed mindset is the belief that intelligence and abilities are innate traits that cannot be changed. Dweck's work is important to the field of youth development because young people who develop a growth mindset are more resilient, embrace challenges, learn from criticism, and ultimately achieve higher levels of success compared to those with a fixed mindset.



KEY FINDING 4

Spy Hop provides a secure and inclusive “third space”—outside of school and home—where young people join a diverse cultural community, fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness among peers and trusted adults.



It made me feel like I belonged somewhere, and without that, I know for a fact that I would not have succeeded in my career and life events for the last decade.

—A Spy Hop alum



Spy Hop's impact extends well beyond youth media creation, media literacy, and building durable skills that enhance participants' career prospects. Taking part in Spy Hop programming also helps youth make valuable social connections and develop a sense of empathy and belonging that are essential for functioning within a community.

These social-emotional competencies have always been critical, but they are even more so today. A 53-page advisory issued in 2023 from U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy, titled “Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation,” warns of a youth mental health crisis: “Approximately half of U.S. adults report experiencing loneliness, with some of the highest rates among young people.”

While this crisis began before 2020, it was accelerated by the onset of the COVID pandemic. As one Spy Hop student told us: “I think our generation would be heavily different without COVID happening ... because all people were doing was sitting at home consuming social media for

like three months straight. I feel like that can do some irreversible damage to your psyche.”

GREATER PROTECTIVE FACTORS NEEDED FOR MARGINALIZED YOUTH

Aside from COVID and the negative effects of social media, the Surgeon General's report identifies other factors contributing to poor mental health among young people today. These include increased academic pressure, childhood traumas, substance abuse among teens and young adults, and societal issues such as income inequality, racism, gun violence, and climate change.

According to a report from the Center for Study of Social Policy, members of historically marginalized identity groups based on factors such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, economic circumstances, geographic location, and involvement in child- and youth-serving systems—key demographics served by Spy Hop programming—“tend to fare worse.” For example, “56% of LGBTQ youth reported that their mental health was poor most of the time or always,” the report says.

Since the pandemic, new research frameworks have emerged in the fields of youth development, sociology, and preventive science, suggesting that certain “protective factors” play a crucial role in preventing mental illness and risky behaviors among teens and adolescents.

These protective factors are described as attributes, conditions, or experiences that promote wellness and positive development. They include belonging to a community, positive relationships with peers, and access to supportive and trusting adults—all conditions that Spy Hop cultivates.

SPY HOP IS A CRITICAL ‘THIRD SPACE’

Kris Gutiérrez, a prominent learning theorist, defines a third space as environments or settings where individuals from diverse backgrounds come together to engage in collaborative learning and knowledge construction. This concept draws from sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interactions and cultural context in shaping learning processes.

In Gutiérrez's framework, a third space is neither the traditional classroom nor the home environment but exists as an intermediary space where learners can interact with peers and mentors in ways that bridge formal and informal learning experiences. This space often promotes dialogue, negotiation, and the exchange of ideas among participants, fostering a sense of belonging and community.

Spy Hop emerges as a safe and youth-powered third space for young people, offering an environment outside of school and home where they can explore various aspects of their identities among a diverse set of peers. Our research, conducted over several years, provides ample evidence of how belonging to the unique creative community at Spy Hop enhances the protective factors of young people against social isolation, low self-esteem, and disconnection from their community.

Specifically, Spy Hop's provision of a space and experiences where youth can forge close friendships with peers while also cultivating positive relationships with supportive and trusted adults plays a pivotal and catalytic role in healthy youth development.

KEY BENEFITS

Our research shows that participants in Spy Hop's afterschool programs are gaining several key benefits from their experience that are likely playing a significant role in their mental well-being, such as:

- Exposure to positive adult role models who are seen as members of their affinity group.
- Cultivation of real, honest friendships based on common interests.
- Growing belief that they are part of a community.
- Acceptance of different identities and diverse perspectives.

POSITIVE ADULT ROLE MODELS

Research in youth development has shown a direct correlation between the presence of at least one positive adult role model in an adolescent's life and their capacity to overcome challenges and thrive into adulthood.

Outside of family, teens don't develop trustful bonds with adults quickly or easily. Yet, a significant number of Spy Hop students report that they gained at least one new supportive adult relationship during their time in the program. These bonds are essential to healthy social development.

As reported in pre and post surveys measuring social-emotional learning growth, 49% of surveyed Spy Hop students report an increase in the number of supportive adults who can be "counted on for help," who "pay attention to their lives," and who expect them to "explore their interests." (Hello Insight)

Youth think of mentors as friends, expert guides, confidants, advocates, and role models. This seems to suggest that students look to Spy Hop mentors to fulfill roles that might be missing from their lives. Consider the following exchange

between a student and her mentor:

Student: "You're more like a mom to me. You're like my mom. But in a great way."

Mentor: "Yeah. Okay."

Student: "That's not a bad way for somebody to be. I don't know, like, more understanding."

Mentor: "I understand what you're saying. Like a comforting person?"

Student: "Yeah."

“

"My mentor is the most supportive adult in my life. She supports what I already have done and pushes me to do more.

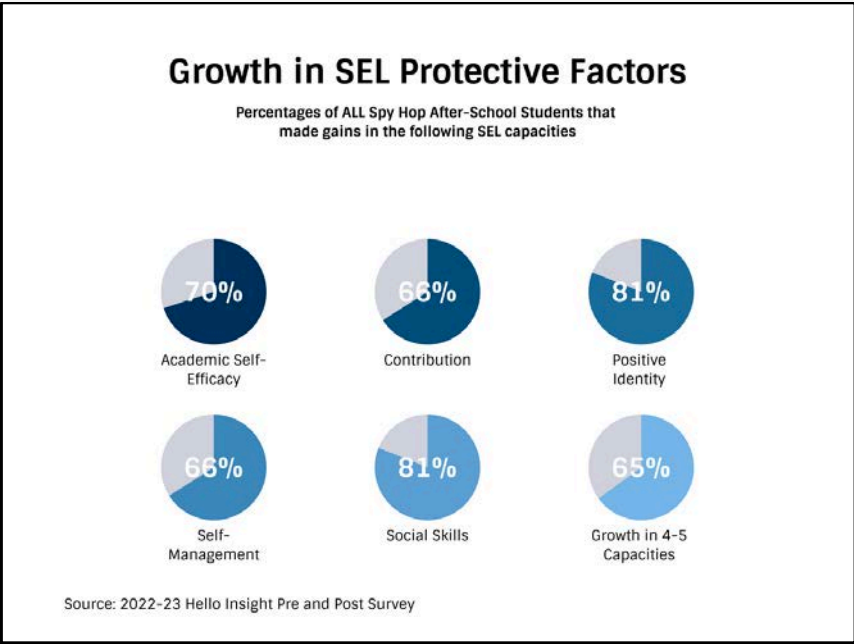
—A Power Up! student

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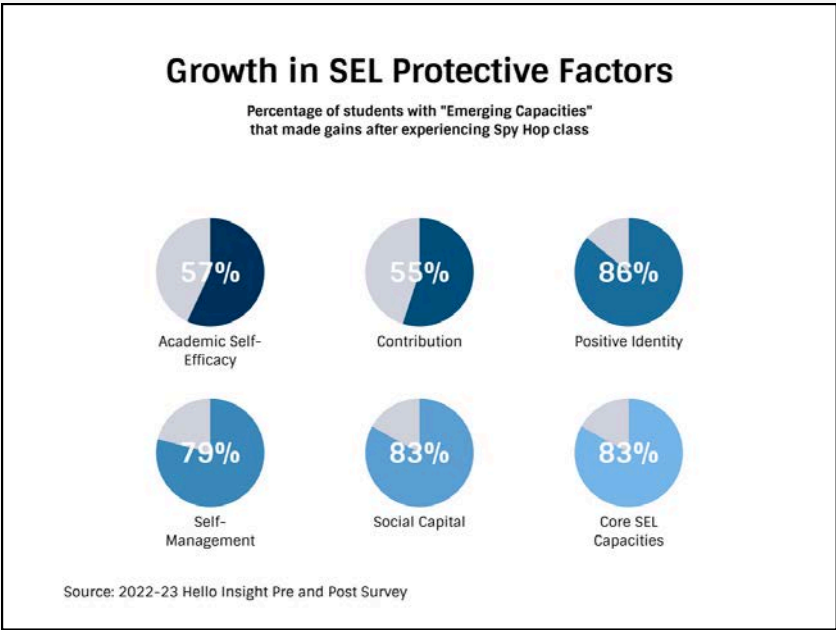
GROWTH IN SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL CAPACITIES AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Figure 3



In Figure 3, data gathered from pre and post surveys conducted in 2022-23 illustrate the percentage of Spy Hop students who succeeded in growing and developing additional SEL capacities and protective factors over the course of a class term. This graph includes both students with emerging and with advanced capacities. Sixty-five percent of all students surveyed made gains in 4-5 capacities, a significant degree of growth in protective factors.

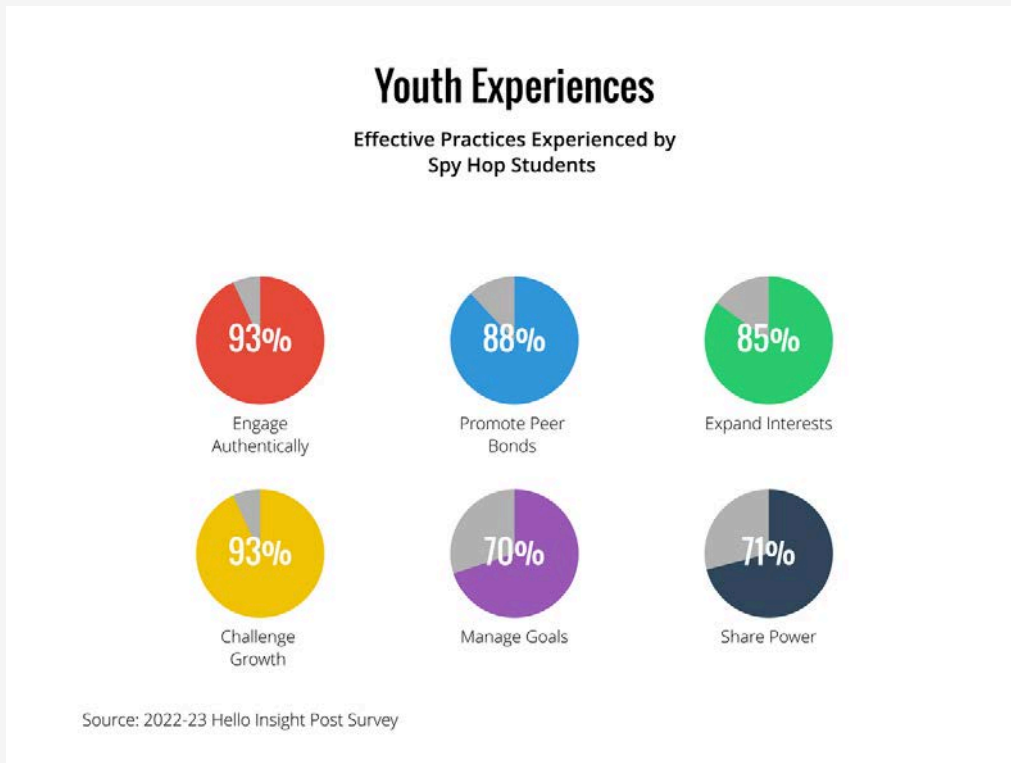
Figure 4



Young people with emerging capacities as shown in Figure 4 are those that enter the program scoring low when compared to others in the large national Hello Insight dataset, and yet have the most potential for growth. The high rate of growth in all areas, particularly in Positive Identity (86%) is notable, indicating that the majority of Spy Hop's most vulnerable students are receiving high quality research-based positive youth development experiences (see Figure 5) that enable young people to flourish.

YOUTH EXPERIENCES ALIGN TO LEARNING PREFERENCES

Figure 5



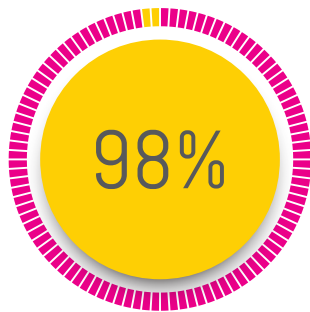
Research tells us that it's important to align program activities and services with young people's learning styles and preferences. This ensures that young people remain engaged. Data collected through Hello Insight pre and post surveys show that a high percentage of Spy Hop students are exposed to the kind of experiences and effective practices that promote gains in SEL. These practices include:

- Engage Authentically
- Expand Interest
- Promote Peer Bonds
- Manage Goals
- Challenge Growth
- Share Power

(See Appendix A for detailed descriptions)

Figure 5 illustrates that 93% of surveyed students engage authentically in programs. As detailed in Find One earlier in this report, Engage Authentically lies at the core of the Spy Hop Way and its theory of action.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS



98% of youth participants report that their mentors “care about me, my interests and my work.”

Source: Hello Insight Pre/Post Surveys 2022-23

Spy Hop participants note that creating music and art together helps them quickly form bonds with each other, despite their initial differences. This process of collaborating around a common interest accelerates the development of relationships within the group.

During an end-of-class podcast reflection, students in a “Loud and Clear” class talked about how nervous they were when they first came to class—a time that seemed like a distant memory for them. “I really have connected with each and every one of you,” one student said. Another agreed: “We grew like a little family here because, you know, we got to know everybody.”

One student who battled challenges with being accepted outside of Spy Hop related how the friendship and kindness of classmates helped them overcome their apprehension: “I really was, like, super nervous at the beginning of the year when we joined this ... and I tried to stay as quiet as possible. But there were two people who really pulled me out of my little bubble, and ... we are like the best of friends [now].”

Several students across various discussion groups described how the relationships they forged at Spy Hop helped them make friends outside the program as well. “Because of Spy Hop, I actually talk to people outside my house,” one student said. “Like, that is pretty impressive.”

BECOMING PART OF A COMMUNITY



Taking part in Spy Hop programming helps young people feel like they're part of a community, where they're accepted for who they are.

When students who have participated in multiple classes at Spy Hop over time are asked what made them keep coming back, they immediately become animated and their eyes light up with enthusiasm.

“I feel great here,” one student shared. Another said: “Everyone in this building is very approachable and just fun to be around.” A third student adds: “This place is different from everywhere else I've been trying to pursue this. There's just something about this place when you walk in, and I've always felt very accepted here. I can be who I want to be, and everybody here will help me get there. That's what kept me coming back.”

For many participants, this sense of connection extends to the broader community and not just Spy Hop classes. For instance, students forge a connection with the Salt Lake City community through interactions with fellow deejays, professionals in the field, and exposure to the local arts scene.

OPENNESS TO DIVERSITY

Spy Hop is so wonderfully diverse. It was the first place I finally got to be around other people of color, especially women of color, which hugely impacted my self-perception so positively.
—A Spy Hop alum

Participation in a diverse, inclusive, and youth-centered creative community fosters cross-cultural fluency among young people, shaping them into more open-minded, empathetic, and socially connected adults. It helps them learn to appreciate other perspectives, something that's sorely needed in today's fractured political climate. It also helps students from traditionally marginalized communities become more comfortable with their own identity.

"Spy Hop makes you more engaged in your community [and] the people around you," one former student reflected. "I'm adopted, and I grew up in a white family in a very white suburb. Spy Hop was the first time ... that I got to interact with other people of color, which is super, super important to me. Those relationships were significant to me. But also when you're around more diverse people, it gives you, like, a reason to be invested in other people. You learn so much of themselves and also about yourself. And I think inherently, that makes you care more."

Another alum observed: "If it weren't for Spy Hop, I wouldn't be as open to having conversations. I was raised in a sheltered home, but coming into a space like Spy Hop, the diversity is just so much different. I think that definitely has impacted me, especially with everything that happened in 2020 with

women's rights. I was very involved in a lot of that stuff. And I think Spy Hop had a big part to play in that."

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS MATTER FOR STUDENTS—AND SOCIETY

Fostering a sense of connectedness isn't just important for youth mental health and wellness. It's also critical for society at large.

As the Surgeon General's report indicates, studies show that stronger family and community connections during adolescence correlate with increased civic engagement outcomes in adulthood. These outcomes include a heightened probability of voting and involvement in social action and advocacy groups.

The Surgeon General's report offers several recommendations for overcoming youth isolation. These include helping young people cultivate safe and caring relationships with family and other supportive mentors, in which they experience acceptance, positive validation, and open communication; and supporting young people to build healthy relationships with peers and to navigate peer pressure.

Spy Hop effectively supports these goals. It provides a safe and supportive environment where participants feel empowered to express themselves authentically and pursue their interests and passions. Students develop powerful bonds with each other (and with adult mentors) as they learn to navigate challenging life circumstances related to their identity, sexuality, and family dynamics. In the process, they develop a strong sense of belonging not only at Spy Hop, but to the larger community. These interpersonal and cross-cultural connections help them adapt to life beyond Spy Hop classes.



MENTORS: INTEGRAL TO SPY HOP'S SUCCESS

None of the results we observed would be possible without the Spy Hop mentors and the guidance they provide to students. This guidance includes not only technical instruction in media making but also encouragement and support. Spy Hop mentors play an integral role in helping youth gain skills and confidence that position them for success in any career path they choose.

TRUSTED ADULTS AND PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS

Spy Hop mentors are full-time professional teaching artists who are also educated in positive youth development. Currently there are 11 mentors, two of whom are Spy Hop alumni.

Participants contrasted their experiences at Spy Hop with those in traditional school settings, noting the differentiated relationships they had with mentors as compared to teachers. They described how mentors at Spy Hop treat them with respect and take their interests seriously, fostering a sense of trust and mutual understanding. This unique mentorship dynamic contributes to students' personal and artistic growth, as mentors provide support and guidance in various aspects of their lives, not just their creative pursuits.

"My mentor is the most supportive adult in my life," one student said. "She supports what I already have done and pushes me to do more."

Several alumni reflected on how these relationships influenced their values, beliefs, and career aspirations, with mentors serving as role models for navigating adulthood with professionalism and purpose.

The fact that she was always open to giving advice and helping us with college stuff was amazing. At any time I could go to her with any question, and she'd have a good answer or be able to point me to someone who does.

—A Spy Hop alum

In 2023, 99% of surveyed students perceived their mentor as a professional in their field; 98% believed their mentor cares about them, their interests, and their work; and 96% said their mentor challenged them to do their best.

THE SPY HOP PUSH

In previous evaluation reports, we've highlighted the important ways that teaching artists encourage students to challenge themselves by revising their work, reflecting on their own voices, and experimenting with new ways to solve creative problems. We see ample evidence that the Spy Hop Push remains a key component of mentor practice—and it might have an even more significant impact on Gen Z's ability to level up their skills.

Gen Zers, who grew up with smartphones and broadband, are accustomed to being self-taught, particularly when learning media arts disciplines that are rarely taught in schools. Spy Hop students are quick to credit their mentors' generosity in sharing knowledge, both supportive and critical, as foundational to their growth.

"The audio world is such a cutthroat, so toxic a space," one student said. "Like if you were to meet a 70-year-old engineer, he would not tell you a thing. You'll just have to figure it out, right? So having people like Dan, people like Cathy, people like Pepe—all these people just willing to give you every piece of information they possibly have ... people who are like the best at what they do ... it just makes us feel so grateful."

Mentors not only share their technical knowledge but also encourage students to strive for the best work they can create by persevering through problems, listening to critical feedback, and taking more creative risks.

HONEST FEEDBACK

One student described how this feedback leads to honest self-reflection: "If one of the mentors sees something you could work on in not just your art, but who you are, it will be known—but not in a mean way. ... I feel like the criticism you get from your mentors or from your peers here is always constructive. I don't think I've ever had a piece of criticism that brought me down."

Mentors are trusted because they are professional artists themselves. "That builds a huge amount of, like, ethos," one student said. "And I can see what they're talking about in the real world as they tell me. I will start to notice things I've never seen before. That was really, really helpful."

One alumnus attributes the push he received from Spy Hop, in part, for being awarded an Adobe Creative Scholarship that paid for his college degree in filmmaking. He explains: "I don't want to stop at 'good.' I want to strive to create something great or have a significant impact on others. I wouldn't have been able to attend the college I wanted to [unless] Spy Hop gave me the confidence and boost to apply to universities and pursue my goals. [My] experiences with projects, as well as interactions with mentors and others, helped shape the person I am now."

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INVESTMENT IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR MENTORS AND STAFF

Although Spy Hop has consistently offered training in youth development for well over a decade, the last two years have marked a significant shift in terms of its investment in professional development (PD) resources and supports for teaching artists and staff.

During 2022 and 2023, mentors engaged in 271 hours of PD, encompassing various formats such as extended workshops and weekly community-of-practice sessions dedicated to best practices in teaching and learning. All PD initiatives are aligned with Spy Hop's strategic plan, centering on anti-racist practices and policies.

Kasandra VerBruggen, Spy Hop's Executive Director, describes the strategy of hiring a full-time staff of teaching artists as one organized "by design" to foster Spy Hop's social epistemology around youth media arts education, racial and gender justice, and culturally responsive pedagogy. VerBruggen emphasizes the importance of authentic engagement with young people and the need for classrooms and spaces with high levels of safety and belonging.

Recognizing the need for diverse approaches through an equity lens, Spy Hop initiated a comprehensive, multi-tiered training initiative in 2021 during the transition out of COVID to cultivate a more culturally responsive approach that addresses student wellness.

Spy Hop's Professional Development and Training Program is categorized by team or department and based on individual needs. Developed collaboratively with input from Spy Hop's leadership staff, the plan encompasses leadership

and management training, individual artistic development plans, and conference attendance.

POSITIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

In particular, Spy Hop's Artist Development Program is designed to nurture the artistic excellence and individuality of the organization's full-time teaching artists, providing resources for skill enhancement, creative expression, and sharing art with the world. This holistic support system is deemed essential for Spy Hop's teaching artists to thrive in their careers as professional artists and educators, creating a positive organizational culture that values continuous learning and creativity.

VerBruggen cited numerous ways that the organization creates inclusive spaces for queer and other marginalized youth. For example, Spy Hop has an anti-racism team that meets and plans monthly activities for all staff to watch movies, read articles, and listen to music giving a voice to issues faced by marginalized communities. The team then facilitates discussions about the insights gained from these activities and how they relate to mentors' work at Spy Hop. While tremendous strides have been made, as VerBruggen notes, "this is ongoing work."



NOTABLE PD OFFERINGS FOR SPY HOP MENTORS AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN 2022-23

Training Type	Provider	Who Participated
Risk and Protective Factors for Youth	Substance Abuse Prevention Training	Mentors
Teen Outreach Prevention Program®	Wyman's (TOP)® Alignment on health equity for youth	Mentors
Mitigating Bias & Building a Caring Culture	Trinh Mai Counseling & Consulting	Mentors and staff
Bridging Across Differences	Trinh Mai Counseling & Consulting	Mentors and staff
Trauma-Informed Best Practice	Michael Cox, LCSW	Mentors
Managing in a Changing World	Management Center	Leadership
Community Partnership and Organizing	University Neighborhood Partners	Leadership
Best Practices in Youth Media Teaching and Learning Game-like learning and backwards design	Spy Hop's internal community of practice weekly meetings. Margaret Conway, Director of Learning at Convergence Design Lab	Mentors
Media Arts and Technology Skill Shares	On-going weekly sessions where mentors teach each other various aspects of their respective art mediums as a cross-training tool to develop skills in other artforms.	Mentors

CONCLUSION

Our findings indicate that Spy Hop's after-school programming shapes youth development in profound ways that have a lasting effect, preparing them for a complex and uncertain future.

Participants gain technical proficiency in media making and a newfound confidence in their abilities. But they also gain so much more. They learn valuable media literacy skills that help them navigate a communications landscape in which it's becoming increasingly difficult to discern the truth. And they cultivate a creative voice and agency that help them express themselves and advocate for change. These developments equip them to participate fully in the democratic process, empowering them to construct their own futures.

What's more, Spy Hop participants acquire durable skills such as creative and collaborative problem solving and resilience—skills that will help them thrive in whatever career path they might choose. They also develop a sense of belonging and community connection that combats the isolation many young people increasingly feel and enhances their mental, social, and emotional wellness.

Every generation has its own unique contextual challenges, and Gen Z is no different. But our evaluation suggests that Spy Hop's thoughtfully designed methodology is well-suited to supporting the needs of post-COVID Gen Zers in particular. By taking part in a collaborative creative community, guided and supported by mentors who are well trained in youth development strategies, Spy Hop participants are “glowing up” and building the self-efficacy required for contributing as positive and productive members of society.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Expand access to underserved communities:

While Spy Hop has been successful in fostering creative and technical skills among young people, there is a need to expand access for underserved communities and create pathways for participation between community and after-school programs.

2

Integrate entrepreneurship skills:

In addition to technical and creative training, incorporating opportunities for learning entrepreneurship skills can prepare participants for the professional landscape more effectively. Understanding the business side of the media arts industry, including marketing, finance, and project management, would be invaluable for participants pursuing careers in this field.

3

Continue mentorship through a robust alumni network:

Creating a sustained support system for program alumni can strengthen Spy Hop's impact. Establishing an alumni network and providing ongoing mentorship opportunities can further guide and support participants as they transition into higher education or pursue careers in the media arts industry.

4

Strengthen partnerships with industry leaders and organizations:

Expanding and deepening partnerships with the media industry and creative agencies can provide participants with access to industry insights, networking opportunities, and potential internships or employment. This can further enhance the real-world exposure and experiences for program participants.

5

Assess the program's long-term impact:

Implementing long-term evaluation strategies to track the career trajectories and personal growth of program alumni can provide valuable insights into the sustained impact of Spy Hop. Understanding the long-term influence of the program on participants' career paths and community contributions can inform future enhancements and iterations.

ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

Since 2017, Convergence Design Lab has served as the external independent evaluator for Spy Hop's youth media programs. This is the fourth biennial evaluation report we have produced. Each evaluation builds upon prior knowledge and evidence gathered from later periods of study. The purpose of this evaluation is to better understand the outcomes and impact of Spy Hop programs on youth, communities, and audiences. Using Spy Hop's logic model and its program goals as a guide, we seek to explore how Spy Hop programs and practices...

- Impact youth capacities and competencies on the proximal, intermediate, and distal levels.
- Impact the local/global communities and audiences that interface with Spy Hop youth programs.

FOCUS OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

While we recognize that Spy Hop operates in many contexts and faces unique challenges and opportunities specific to the populations it serves, we also posit that the findings described in this report can be generalized across many of Spy Hop's other programs, such as Voices of the West and Sending Messages.

While many of these classes do not take place at the Kahlert Youth Media Center, the Youth in Care and Community programs share similar teaching artists, resources, pedagogies, and approaches. Most importantly, they all adhere to The Spy Hop Way, a methodology for achieving deep levels of impact on youth and the audiences they serve—and the foregrounding of youth voices is a consistent area of focus across all Spy Hop programming.

DATA SOURCES

- End-of-class surveys (n. 215)
- Hello Insight pre and post surveys on social-emotional growth and program quality (n. 180)
- Focus groups and reflection podcasts (n. 30 youth participants)
- Focus groups, meetings, and workshops with staff and mentors (6-8 hrs.)
- Audience surveys (n. 138)
- On-site class observations (n. 7)
- Alumni focus groups and interviews (n. 11)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1 How does the positioning of youth as emerging professional creators impact their media arts/literacy skill development?

2 How does Spy Hop's emphasis on amplifying youth voice in real world contexts shape the media made and its impact on audiences?

3 How does Spy Hop's intention to cultivate creative community shape young people's sense of connectedness and belonging at Spy Hop and beyond?

4 How does the positioning of youth as emerging professional creators impact their media arts/literacy skill development?

METHODOLOGY

Convergence Design Lab uses a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of Spy Hop programming. This approach includes both qualitative and quantitative measures to help us gain a deeper understanding of what specific components of Spy Hop's model drive the greatest gains and to identify areas for growth.

Our approach includes the following data collection methods:

Surveys: Pre-and post-program surveys are administered to young people to assess changes in their media arts skills, program satisfaction, social-emotional skills growth, and critical media literacy. The surveys include both quantitative and qualitative questions to gather a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences.

Interviews/focus groups: In-depth focus groups and interviews were conducted with young people and Spy Hop alumni to gain further insights into their program experiences, their personal growth, and the impact of the program on their lives.

Ethnographic observation: Program activities and interactions were observed by evaluators to assess learner engagement and the learner environment.

Artifacts and portfolio review: The evaluators reviewed media arts pieces created by young people throughout the program, including films, music tracks, podcasts, design elements, and other creative works. These artifacts serve as evidence of the participants' growth and progress in their media arts skills.

Public events and audience responses: Evaluators attended some events—such as Heatwave and PitchNic—to observe audience responses in person. We also administered audience surveys.

RESEARCH/PRACTITIONER PARTNERSHIP: YOUTH REFLECTION PODCASTING

Evaluators often cherish the opportunity to observe students engaging with their peers and mentors in real-world settings to produce work. This ethnographic research approach yields valuable insights into key measures of program quality, including student engagement, inclusiveness, interpersonal communication, collaborative practices, learning experiences, and skill development. In-person observations by evaluators allow for the capture of ephemeral data such as sounds, sights, feelings, expressions, gestures, conversations, and behaviors.

While classroom observations, focus groups, and interviews were conducted for this evaluation report, one of the most enlightening sources of data emerged out of Convergence Design Lab and Spy's research/practitioner partnership through a unique form of ethnographic observation called Youth Reflection Podcasting.

In this approach, mentors facilitate group discussions with students using prompts developed collaboratively with Spy Hop's Community of Practice. The discussions are recorded, streamed to Spy Hop's Soundcloud channel, transcribed, and coded according to recurring themes, forming a significant basis for the findings and analysis presented in the report.

These podcasts are used in three ways:

1. Formative evaluation for Spy Hop mentors. According to Myke Johnson, Spy Hop's Education Director, "the podcasts are our favorite form of student feedback."
2. Evaluation impact reporting conducted by Convergence Design Lab
3. Impact storytelling by transparently sharing out on Spy Hop's social media channels.

PODCAST REFLECTION PROTOCOL

In this approach, mentors set students up in a circle with table mics. All students have headphones on. A sound mixing board sits in the center, where the lead mentor can check for audio levels. Drawing from a general protocol of prompts that were developed in collaboration with Spy Hop's Community of Practice, the mentor facilitates a group discussion asking students to reflect on the class and their experiences. It doesn't take long before students jump right into a series of topics with excitement, honesty, and introspection.

As evaluators, we found that the conversations that ensued have provided some of the most authentic forms of data we have ever collected, and the voices of youth from these podcasts breathe through this entire report.

DATA ANALYSIS

Once the data is collected, we synthesize the evidence using a process inspired by grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). Through open coding, we aim to identify the perspectives and concepts that repeat themselves. We then group those insights into themes, drawing upon inductive reasoning. Consistent with qualitative methods, our data collection uses multiple sources to achieve triangulation (Creswell, 2008; Yin, 2013) and establish chains of evidence that support our findings. This methodology provides verifiability that the outcomes and impacts we report on are predictable and consistent rather than outlying incidents.

In analyzing the data, we have sought to understand how Spy Hop's after-school programming affects not just youth, but also their local and global communities, considering best practices in youth development (Barron et al., 2014; Larson, 2000; Lerner et al., 2005) and education (Mehta, J. & Fine, S., 2015).

Our approach to data collection and analysis draws upon subjectivist theories of research, with a particular emphasis on standpoint theory, which asserts that meaning is constructed in part through the social positions we hold in relation to the object of inquiry. In short, we believe that young people are the best authorities on their own experiences.

We also consider quantitative data from Spy Hop's internal assessments, as well as robust and nationally normed social-emotional learning data from a third-party research body, Hello Insight.

INTERPRETATION

Our final step is to interpret 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.



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APPENDIX A

HELLO INSIGHT: MEASURES FOR SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Throughout Spy Hop's after-school programs, young people gain 21st-century skills and develop social and emotional capacities that correlate with long-term gains in high school completion, college/career readiness, and increased life-long thriving. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. There is growing evidence showing that SEL qualities rival academic or technical skills in their ability to predict employment and earnings, among other outcomes. While the demand for such skills has increased over the past 20 years, many employers around the world have reported that job candidates lack the durable skills needed to fill available positions

In the face of current societal economic, environmental, and social challenges, the promotion of these non-academic skills is seen as more critical than ever before with business and political leaders urging schools to pay more attention to equipping students with lifelong skills such as a positive identity, social skills, self-management, social capital, academic self-efficacy, and a sense of contribution – often referred to as SEL or “21st Century Skills” ([CASEL](#), 2022). To meet these needs, Spy Hop programs integrate essential research-based practices that have been shown to promote these types of outcomes for young people. In addition, these skills are regularly assessed to ensure that each young person is on a pathway toward success.

To accomplish this, Spy Hop uses an online learning and evaluation platform – Hello Insight to deploy scientifically validated tools and analytics that have been tested and statistically validated through surveying more than 200,000 young people, in over 2,000 programs, in over 750 organizations nation-wide. This field standard platform allows Spy Hop to benchmark young people's outcome growth against other young people with similar attributes, assuring that the growth they see is meaningful and significant.

Pre/Post surveys measure SEL skill development during Spy Hop programs and assess youth's experience of key positive youth development practices that have been correlated with the types of SEL growth that lead to long-term academic gains, career and workforce development, positive behaviors, and increased thriving.

Spy Hop is dedicated to ongoing learning and improvement. Therefore, it uses PRE assessment results to understand better the capacities of the young people it serves so that programs can be tailored to meet students' unique needs. In addition, POST assessment results help Spy Hop understand young peoples' experiences so that Spy Hop can continue to make adjustments and improvements.

APPENDIX A

SEL OUTCOMES MEASURED

Between Fall 2022 and June 2023, Spy Hop used Hello Insight youth development evaluation platform to measure SEL outcomes for the young people in its programs. In addition, the evaluation examined the degree to which young people experienced the kind of effective practices that have been shown to promote these types of outcomes ([The Art and Science of Effective Youth Programs](#), 2016). Hello Insight tools have been scientifically validated and continuously tested with more than 750 organizations, serving 200,000 young people in 44 states nationwide. The tools have proven to be strong measures (with no age, gender, ethnicity bias) of the following SEL outcomes:

- Core SEL ($\alpha=.90$). Core SEL encapsulates the five SEL capacities that are all interdependent, and positively affect the development of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral factors in young people's lives. Core SEL is not a simple average of the other five capacities. It is a unique measurement of all of the questions across the five capacities. Each set of questions have unique values when it comes to measuring Core SEL.
- Self Management ($\alpha=.80$). Self-management encompasses a young person's ability to regulate their emotions and behavior, take positive risks, and persist through life's challenges. Self-management correlates with longer-term outcomes such as higher grade point averages and standardized test scores, fewer suspensions and expulsions, and improved social development (Bandy & Moore, 2010).
- Social Skills ($\alpha=.75$). Social Skills is the ability of a young person to take others' perspectives into account and to develop a sense of caring and empathy. Social skills are considered an important part of development because it supports positive social interactions and promotes positive interactions between young people and their environment (Payton, J.W. et al., 2008).
- Positive Identity ($\alpha=.73$). Positive Identity is a young person's internal sense of who they are and confidence to explore the multiple facets of their identities. Positive Identity is important for young people to feel empowered to make decisions for themselves and for them to develop resilience in the face of challenges. Positive Identity is correlated with higher confidence and reduced behavioral problems (McLaughlin, M.W., 2000).
- Social Capital ($\alpha=.91$). Social capital is a young person's positive bonds with people and institutions (e.g., school, community center, youth-serving organization). Social capital is considered important for building a young person's support network and sense
- of belonging within their environment (Benson, 2008; McLaughlin, 2000; Mishook, et al., 2012).
- Academic Self-Efficacy ($\alpha=.78$). Academic Self-Efficacy is a young person's motivation and perceived mastery over their own learning, school performance, and potential to attain academic success. Young people with Academic Self-Efficacy have higher grade point averages and standardized test scores, fewer suspensions and expulsions, as well as longer-term gains in skills to identify, attain, and retain a career (Afterschool Alliance, 2009; Zins, J.E., et al., 2004).
- Contribution ($\alpha=.75$). Contribution is a young person's desire to engage with and contribute to family, community, and society. Contribution has been correlated with a propensity to engage civically as adults, maintain positive links to the institutions of civic society, and improved social development (Lerner, R. M., et al., 2005).

APPENDIX A (cont.)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES

Hello Insight studies have shown that the following effective practices promote gains in SEL ([The Art and Sciences of Effective Youth Programs](#)), and indeed many other researchers have discovered similar correlations.

- **Engage Authentically ($\alpha=.86$).** Engage Authentically is a young person's experience with an adult who takes the time to get to know them by listening and understanding who they are — their cultural and lived experiences, their interests, and their passions. Engaging authentically involves placing young people's personal stories at the center of the program's work and ensuring that they feel valued, heard, and cared for by adults. This is a Foundational Experience for young people or one that lays the groundwork for all of the others in the Hello Insight Logic Model. Building these types of relationships have been shown to increase positive youth development and thriving (Larson, R. & Dawes, N. 2015, Search Institute, 2022).
- **Promote Peer Bonds ($\alpha=.79$).** Promote Peer Bonds is a young person's experience with an adult who helps them work with peers in teams and groups, creating a safe space to learn with and from one another, exploring similarities and differences, and developing deep bonds and relationships. Promoting peer bonds involves supporting young people to share and value one another's unique perspectives, experiences, strengths, and ideas. This is a Foundational Experience for young people, bolstering all other Hello Insight PYD practices. Positive peer engagement increases self-confidence and life skills; academic motivation; and leadership skills and disposition (Search Institute, 2020). This is a Foundational Experience for young people, bolstering all of the other PYD practices and promoting the greatest positive impact on SEL growth across all types of young people.
- **Expand Interests ($\alpha=.85$).** Expand Interests is a young person's experience with an adult who supports them to try new things, broaden their horizons, learn about other people's cultures and perspectives, and explore their own identities. Expanding interests involves exposing young people to new ideas, experiences, and places. It has been shown to increase school engagement and highschool graduation rates; promote healthy behaviors and decrease risky behaviors; increase overall satisfaction with life (Search Institute, 2020); increase a sense of contribution and desire to give back; and promotes a healthy positive identity (Benson, P.L. 2006; Scales, P.C., et al., 2011).
- **Manage Goals ($\alpha=.79$).** Manage Goals is a young person's experience with an adult who assists them to set and manage goals that are important to them and that build upon their passions and interests. Managing goals involves identifying personal and group goals, breaking these goals down into manageable bit-sized steps, reflecting on challenges and successes, and adjusting as necessary. It has been shown to increase motivation, impacts our perceived control over our future and promotes overall positive youth development (Lerner, R.M., et al., 2011; Houston, E. 2020).

APPENDIX A (cont.)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES (CONT.)

- **Share Power ($\alpha=.78$).** Share Power is a young person's experience with an adult who ensures that their voices and opinions matter. Sharing power involves supporting young people to feel connected, engaged, and included as true contributing members of their programs, teams, groups, communities, and society. It has been shown to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion both in the classroom and society (Zeldin, S, et al., 2000; Sabo-Flores, 2013; Ginwright, S. & James, T., 2002). It also enhances problem solving skills, builds effective communication skills, increases critical consciousness, and ignites a sense of contribution and civic engagement (Sabo Flores, K., 2013; Ginwright, S. & James T., 2002; Zeldin, Z. et al., 2000).
- **Challenge Growth ($\alpha=.88$).** Challenge Growth is a young person's experience with an adult who encourages them to take risks and perform beyond their own expectations. Challenging growth involves four actions: 1) staff expect young people to do their best and to live up to their potential; 2) they stretch and encourage them to go further than they imagine; 3) staff support young people to reflect on failures and to learn from mistakes; and, 4) they hold them accountable by supporting them to take responsibility for their actions (Search Institute, 2018). Challenging a young person's growth promotes resilience (Zhang, Y., et al., 2011), strengthens their ability to stay focused on achieving their long-term goals (Steele, C.M. 2011), enhances their academic performance (Bowen, G., et al., 2012); and increases civic participation (Mesurado, B., et al., 2014).

Spy Hop's **mission** is to mentor young people in the media arts to help them to find their voice, tell their stories, and effect positive change in their lives, communities, and the World.

We **envision** a world in which all young people possess the skills and mindsets necessary for success and that their voices are heard and valued as conduits of change in their communities.



Connect with us!

Kahlert Youth Media Arts Center
208 W Harvey Milk Blvd.
Salt Lake City, UT, 84101
801.532.7500 | spyhop.org



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