

# EDUCATIONAL ARTS TEAM



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## 2021 ANNUAL REPORT





# **MISSION**

**We engage young people with arts based programs that connect creativity with critical thinking in order to stimulate personal growth and academic achievement by making their learning experience more meaningful.**





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# Customized Programs

We offer a range of interactive theater-based workshops for schools, organizations, libraries, companies and community centers that build communication skills and share the joy of creativity.

## For Schools

### **READING COMPREHENSION AND WRITING SKILLS** **BRINGING LITERATURE TO LIFE**

Students relate novels and texts to their own lives, gain understanding of characters and plot, cite textual evidence, and develop writing across genres. Through storytelling, the youngest students develop skills such as visualization and identifying story elements. For Grades K - 12

### **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING** **SELF ESTEEM AND MAKING RIGHT CHOICES**

Programs help students grapple with topics such as problem solving, conflict resolution, and good decision making. For Grades 4 - 8

### **CREATIVE FAMILY LITERACY EVENTS** **PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND PROMOTING READING AT HOME**

Collaborative art and storytelling activities encourage families to read together, involve parents in children's learning, and strengthen family bonds. For Grades K - 3.

### **HANDS-ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** **HIGH IMPACT TEACHING STRATEGIES**

Professional Development sessions equip teachers and administrators with a toolbox of interactive techniques that can be integrated into any school district's language arts curriculum.

## For Community

### **CREATIVE FAMILY LITERACY EVENTS**

School offerings (above) are also available for libraries and community venues.

### **INSPIRING YOUNG WRITERS**

Out-of-school-time workshops feature out-of-your-seat, collaborative activities that help all levels of learners find their inner writer.

### **PERFORMING ARTS ENRICHMENT**

Students learn drama, movement and magic skills, including theater games, improvisation, storytelling, puppet making, and sleight of hand tricks.

### **TEAM BUILDING FOR COMMUNITY AND COMPANY LEADERS**

Sessions focus on effective communication skills, respecting opinions of others, and shared purpose through hands-on activities that open the way to authentic interpersonal exchange.

## Camp Liberty

Our much-loved summer day camp in Liberty State Park-- a green urban oasis where students enjoy arts, music, sports, swimming and so much more.



# STATISTICS

## 996

We conducted **996** virtual and in person workshops that served thousands of students in **19** public schools and **4** community centers during COVID-19 2021.

## 20

We offer **over 20** customizable programs that address literacy, anti-bullying, drug prevention, family engagement, equity and inclusiveness, learning recovery, and writing skills.

## 62%

**62%** of the students we served in Jersey City schools were from economically disadvantaged households.

## 20K

For the past **40 years** Camp Liberty has served some **20,000 kids** from diverse communities.



# FROM THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of EdArts,

When I joined Educational Arts Team as Interim Executive Director in late spring of 2021, the entire country was just beginning to see the light at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel, tentatively re-exploring what it meant to safely see friends, playmates, and teachers-- in person. To socialize, to learn, to experience--in person. And while Omicron late last year caused an unwelcome setback, our essential need to be together--in person--became clearer and clearer.

Faced with the challenges of isolation, then gradual re-entry into the schools during the 12 months of 2021, the strengths of EdArts' amazing staff, results-oriented methodology and supportive Board were never more apparent. We responded to the unpredictable changes with the creativity and flexibility so characteristic of EdArts over the decades. From virtual to in- person to hybrid and back again to in-person teaching, we were able to safely and successfully conduct **996** literacy, social emotional, drug prevention, anti-bullying, writing and other workshops to **thousands of students** and families in northern New Jersey. We continued to work closely with educators to make sure our teaching complemented and supported their goals in the classroom. When conditions permitted, we also were able to hold workshops with our community partners.

Additionally, and happily, beloved Camp Liberty opened with careful attention to safety as well as fun, and we were able to hold eight weeks of non-stop activity for hundreds of campers from all walks of life. To our delight, the summer ended with NO cases of COVID!

To better convey the flavor of the experiences our teaching artists and staff during this past year, we are sharing some of their personal stories in the pages to follow.

Last year also marked a different kind of change when Carmine Tabone, EdArts' Founder and Executive Director of 47+ years, retired in July. Carmine inspired three generations of Jersey City children and built the organization from its start as a city-sponsored initiative in the early seventies into the highly respected, powerfully effective and independent arts education organization it is today. During his years at the helm of EdArts, he led the development of a proven and vibrant arts integration curriculum, fostered a joy of learning in those with whom we connected, and nurtured creative, adaptable teams of teaching artists. As I write this in February, we are well on our way to hiring a new Executive Director to build on Carmine's superb legacy and lead EdArt's next successful chapter. Stay tuned!

Moving ahead, we are looking forward to expanding our work in the schools and community, deepening our relationships with our current partners and identifying new collaborators.

**Our decades of service to the community, our ability to sustain our mission of inclusively serving students, educators and beyond would never have been possible without your support. And while the definition of normal changes from week to week these days, the commitment our team of teaching artists, administrative staff, Board, partners, educators, donors and friends to making a difference to the lives of children does not change– it is deeply reflected in the work of EdArts.**

**For this, and all that you do, we are deeply grateful.**

I hope to see you in person at Camp, in the schools, in the community.

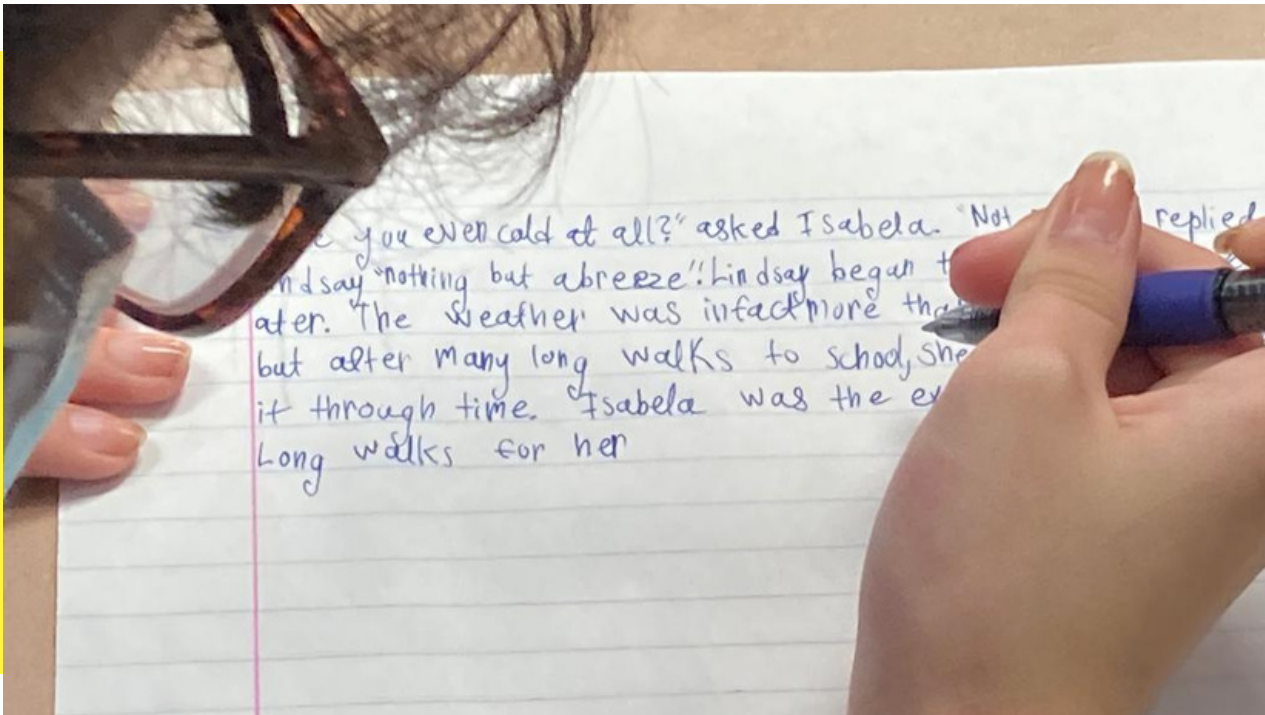
Warmly,



BETSY VORCE



## TEACHING ARTIST, DANI KOPOULOS



In January 2021, classrooms were several months into an entirely virtual school year. Our virtual literacy workshops were able to address the stress, anxiety, and isolation that young people were experiencing during COVID 19 by connecting them to their peers through storytelling, drama, improvisation, art, reading and writing.

We knew that creativity, stories, and human interaction could heal during this time and we were in a unique position to create workshops that addressed both children's mental and emotional concerns as well as learning loss due to distance learning.

The world had changed, after the tribulations of extended isolation. But we realized that the foundational principles that we've always applied to our work with students ---engagement is crucial to learning; each student needs to be met exactly where they're at; and genuine connection is at the heart of effective communication -- had never changed. Through the experience of the pandemic, it became apparent that our philosophy and approach were more relevant than ever.

When we logged on, we asked questions, compared ups and downs, and discussed issues important to them. We got them thinking creatively, and tucked Language Arts learning into the most fun they had in a long day of staring at a screen. They answered questions in the chat, wrote stories, drew pictures and held them up to the camera, created group poems, made dialogue for scenes, shared personal narratives, and supported opinions with reasons. They also sparred with each other, created a whole new style of banter, posted and shared photos and artwork, and engaged in witty repartee in the chat.

No one knew what to expect as we endeavored to adapt our programs to virtual learning. But after a few sessions, teachers began telling us that more students showed up to class on days that they knew Educational Arts Team was coming. In our programs they found a reason to log in and learn. That was the biggest affirmation of all.



## PROGRAM DIRECTOR/TEACHING ARTIST, ROXY ARROJO

Last year we conducted Bringing Literature to Life workshops to the 6th - 8th grade Language Arts classes throughout Jersey City. The workshops used drama based techniques to aid in engagement and reading comprehension with the novel or story in their Studysync textbook, and to improve writing skills. The Bringing Literature to Life program had three different versions as 2021 progressed. The remote version with everyone working from home, the hybrid version with the students in the class but the teaching artist remote, and finally, in the fall, workshops in person.

Returning to the classroom required some adjustment. Expressive faces were lost behind the masks, voices were muffled, and speaking loudly and clearly became more important than ever. The need to feel safe, to collaborate, be part of a group, to create and take risks, to grow academically and emotionally, was greater than ever. Simple warm ups and getting-to-know-you games opened up the students to share their thoughts, relate to each other openly once again, and process the experiences of last couple of years together.

One of the stories we worked with was Jerry Spinelli's *Star Girl*. The students enjoyed analyzing one of the main character's behavior. One of the topics that came from the class was "intent versus impact." The students questioned whether a character was misunderstood by her peers or purposely hurting others. Sharing their perspectives allowed them to understand how a moment that everyone had experienced can be experienced differently.

This led to wonderful debates with the students divided into groups, researching and gathering textual evidence to support their viewpoints. They defended their character's actions. They were engaged. They presented their case. And they had fun. Time after time, we were all disappointed when the class period was over.

"These workshops helped me get more engaged in topics and more creative with them. It also helped me open up more and be less afraid to speak up. As well as making me smile and laugh in ELA classes."  
- 7th Grade Student



## TEACHING ARTIST, DOM BUCCAFUSCO

It took some getting used to, but with virtual learning, I could "enter" the classroom safely to interact with students, even leading them to work in pairs and small groups in the Zoom meeting. Students were able to submit writings directly from their laptops, and communicate with the entire group using the chat box or their microphones. Although I've seen my share of ceilings and light fixtures, with each passing lesson more students became visible and confident about their appearance and self-expression. Of course, we all anxiously awaited the return to the old brick and mortar school house and to reconnect with one another in person.

When the news of re-entry came in the late Fall, I was filled with excitement and a touch of the jitters at the prospect of returning to the classroom after a year and a half. I connected with the shared support and encouragement of my colleagues, an ongoing team attribute of EdArts. My first assignment this past fall was to schedule Bringing Literature to Life lessons with a 7th grade teacher in 3 of her classrooms.

In that particular classroom students were reading the novel *Hatchet*, a story about a boy who was the sole survivor of a plane crash, living alone in the jungle for 47 days. We did a character study, with the students having to imagine and re-enact the main character's thoughts and feelings during various scenes from the book. After brainstorming together, the students put words to paper and wrote first-person monologues based on their ideas.

One student's original character monologue impressed both the teacher and I as he read it aloud to the class,

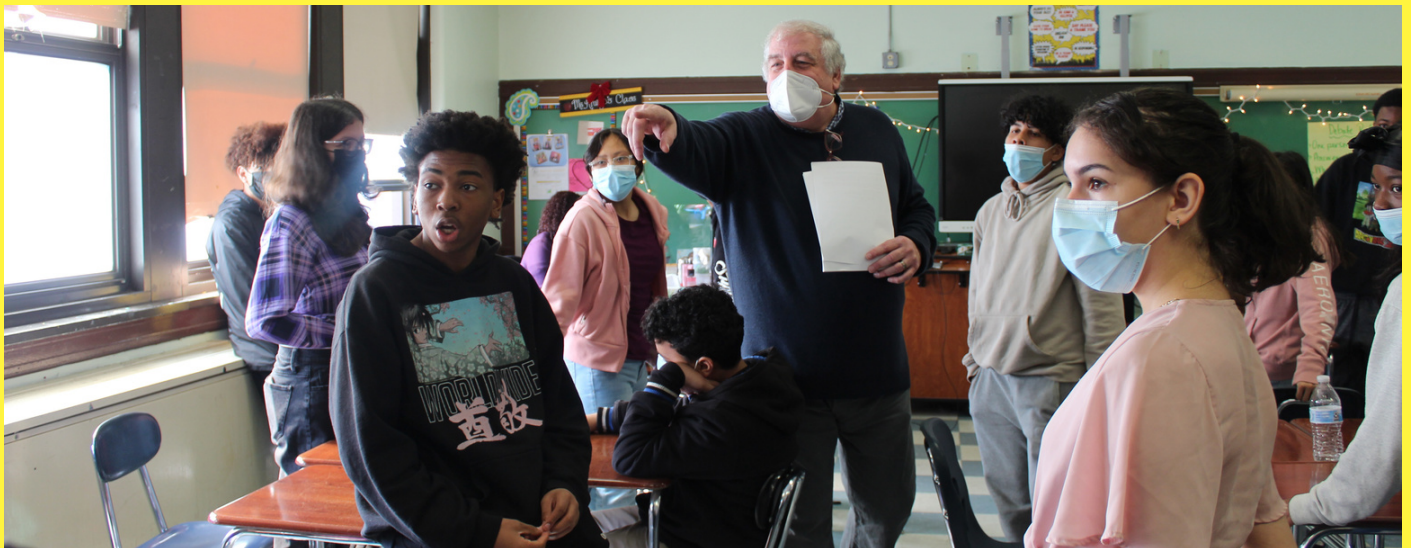
*"Madness, frustration. The type that hurts your head early in the morning like when you chug down an entire ice cream smoothie down your throat. The type that wakes you up at 12:00 a.m. and doesn't let you sleep. The type that reminds you of the secret, and when the plane crashed. Madness frustration. The same words are ringing in my head like when the bell rings at school in the last period. Madness frustration.*

*I just want the feeling of death that the Pharaohs felt in Ancient Egypt. Sadness. Misery. I should've never got on that stupid plane. The Secret and crashing. Madness, frustration, again."*

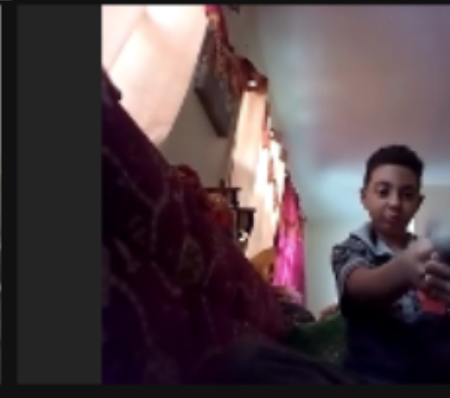
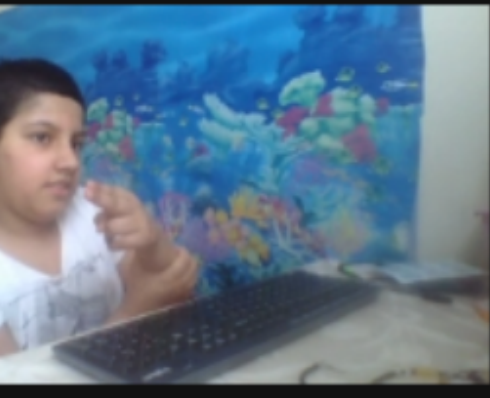
- **Achinthya B.**

These and other student monologues were inspired from texts such as *Hatchet*, *Twelve Angry Men*, *Stargirl*, *Tangerine*, and *The Outsiders*.

In the fragile school days ahead with thoughts of the possibility of a return to virtual learning at any time, I believe our programs are more crucial to students than ever before. Our programs not only bring literature to life, but also bring connectivity to lives, no matter what the circumstances.







We've heard the term "unprecedented times" repeated frequently over the course of the last two years, usually followed by the call to action, "we must rise to the challenge!" This phrase certainly applies to the work we've done in the past months here at the Educational Arts Team.

When schools first closed, we wondered how we would continue our workshops. How could a program that relied on interpersonal communication be conducted electronically? Enter, "Zoom", in the capable hands of a team of problem-solving Teaching Artists!

Given the variety of programs that we had to develop and conduct virtually during the pandemic, I'm proud that we were able to remain effective in our approach - and that we consistently received positive feedback.

I not only taught during this period of time, but as usual, I learned. Of the many programs I worked on at the team, the Hudson County Arts Immersion Exploration (HCAIE) program for youth of all abilities stands out in my mind. Early on in the pandemic, I taught some of our Camp Liberty students how to do magic using household items. The content of those lessons developed into the online magic course I created for the HCAIE after-school program.

The students I worked with in HCAIE were very willing and eager to learn, and as the classes progressed, they came into their own as performers. At HCAIE's Halloween fair, I was delighted to meet most of my students for the first time in person.

One student in particular spent almost the whole time by my side, asking questions and excited to learn and try new tricks. After I showed him some brand new illusions, he asked fellow students to stop by and watch as he performed for them (very well, I might add!) After the fair was over, my student's mother approached me and said,

*"My son is super shy, and never talks to anyone in his school. Your working with him on magic has given him confidence that I've never seen before."*

The student eventually returned to in-person learning, and I was sent a video of him performing magic tricks for his entire class. To me, this was testament that we can continue to "rise" to any occasion, whatever the challenges may be.



Our Family Literacy Events give parents and children an opportunity to bond, tell stories and be creative. As the facilitator I'm in a unique position to help students and parents work together and share a meaningful experience. They learn a story, re-tell it to each other, and make puppets and scenery from paper to perform a show using mini fold-up cardboard stage.

When the pandemic kept us apart for our own health and safety, we wondered how we would continue this unique program. In the warm weather of the spring and summer, we were able to conduct the events outdoors. It was just as fulfilling, and it was a wonderful way to safely gather in parks and community spaces. It became apparent how much we needed these moments. To be together and tell stories. To draw and color. To create. To stop and be engaged in a special moment during a chaotic time.

We also held virtual events. Parents and guardians were not onscreen, but sat next to their children at the ready. Whenever a child needed a pencil, crayon or scissors a hand would come across the screen at that moment. Home-based Family Literacy was completely different, but just as loved and effective.

Then came the school year. By Fall, I was finally allowed to go into a classroom. But parents were not allowed. A bigger challenge yet. How could we keep the families involved?

By always adjusting and never abandoning, we came up with another plan. We did the workshop with the children in school. They took their stages and stories home to share with their parents/guardians. The children were excited to give their parents "homework" in the form of a brief survey about the experience. It worked! Parents were asking for more programs like this, as it engaged not only the student, but the entire family.

The one true constant throughout this year was that the core of who we are and what we do remains the same. What are the needs of the students? How can we support teachers and parents? The answer keeps changing. So we do too. I was grateful to be able to have this opportunity to connect with the students, teachers and parents and let them know we are still here and thriving.

Stories connect us. That will never change.



**CAMP LIBERTY REGISTRAR/GRANTS AND PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR,  
SAMANTHA ZEGARRA**

For the past 47 years, Camp Liberty has provided a unique and memorable experience for thousands of young people in our community. The year 2021 was no exception. This past summer we offered 267 campers a lively camp environment grounded in the arts, mutual respect, and positivity -- a much needed fresh-air oasis during the pandemic. Our campers flourished socially and emotionally, as our programming encouraged critical thinking, communication, and group dynamics. After a year of isolation and challenges caused by the pandemic, Camp Liberty offered a safe, in-person outdoor space for campers to interact with their peers. Parents of campers were asked to comment on the benefits of Camp Liberty; here were some of their responses:

*Camp Liberty allows for personal growth, independence and socialization.*  
-Regina R.

*Perfect transition from a long period of lockdown and remote schooling. Getting outdoors, exercise, interaction with friends & peers, structure, etc. It was fantastic.*  
- Joel C.

*Camp Liberty allowed my child to be a normal kid during these non-normal times.*  
-Katie D.

The overwhelming support from our community and the impact we see on our campers and students are extremely meaningful to those of us at EdArts. We are proud of the work we do, and hope to continue bringing quality programming and positive experiences to Northern New Jersey and beyond!



# COMMUNITY EVENTS

## HALLOWEEN

The Educational Arts Team hosted a free community Halloween Event in October with over 300 attendees! This arts-centered event had pumpkin painting, Halloween crafts, story telling, fortune telling, and more.



## VOLUNTEER CLEANUP DAY

Community volunteers helped beautify Camp Liberty in May and spent some time out in the sun with us as we readied camp for the summer.



## HUDSON COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

The Hudson County History Project was a virtual presentation that promoted an appreciation of history among youth in Hudson County. The four-lesson series centered around notable figures and landmarks of relevance to the Afro-American experience in Jersey City.





# 2021 FINANCIALS

## EDUCATIONAL ARTS TEAM REVENUE AND EXPENSES

### REVENUE

Grants	
Foundation	58,175
Government	513,986
Camp Fees	279,244
Donations	21,555
Investments	20,670
Other	2,297
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>895,927</b>

### EXPENSES

Salaries	443,901
Program and Administrative Support	324,711
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>768,612</b>

**CHANGE IN NET ASSETS** 127,315



# SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR INDIVIDUAL 2021 DONORS

**Our mission would not be possible without your engagement and support.**

Catalina Aaranguren  
Kristine Agans  
David Agraz  
Rowan Agraz  
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Samantha Zegarra  
Katherine Zucker



# THANK YOU

## TO THE FOUNDATIONS, GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, CORPORATIONS, AND OTHER PARTNERS WHO MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE

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The Educational Arts Team would like to acknowledge the following for their generous support and partnership in 2021.

Without them, we would not be able to fulfill our mission and have such a positive impact on the families and young people with whom we work.

**Bayonne Community Bank**

**Bayonne Public School District**

**BNP Paribas**

**Dodge Foundation**

**Goldman Sachs**

**Hudson County Health  
and Human Services**

**Hudson County Office of Cultural &  
Heritage Affairs/Tourism Development**

**Jersey Cares**

**Jersey City Department of  
Health and Human Services**

**Jersey City Division of  
Community Development**

**Jersey City Department of  
Public Works**

**L'Oreal USA**

**New Jersey Arts and  
Culture Recovery Fund/  
Princeton Area Community  
Foundation**

**Quotient Technology**

**Turrell Fund**

**UBS Community Corps**

**Liberty State Park**

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