



READING RESIDENCY

Final Report FY 2019

Report compiled by Jenny Toutant. Photos by Jenny Toutant or Rep Teaching Artists.

Launched in 2011/12, the Reading Residency program uses theater to teach literacy skills by engaging students in classroom activities developed around a specific production from our season. Approaching a text the way a theater artist might, students learn key concepts through various methods, including class discussions, dramaturgical research, acting out scenes, and written assignments - connecting to visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners.

Reading Residencies include a Rep Immersion Day and an in-class discussion with an actor from the production. Rep Immersion Day is a full-day program that includes demonstrations and discussions, lunch, a student matinee performance, and a TalkBack.

The assessment of this program was completed in partnership with University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee's Center of Research and Evaluation.

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EDUCATION

Middle School Track

The Middle School track is twenty sessions long, focusing explicitly on developing text evidence skills through the text of one of our productions. This year's curriculum was developed around *In The Heights*, *Christmas at Pemberley*, and *Two Trains Running*.

In the 2018/19 Season, we implemented a Reading Residency in 40 classrooms at 17 schools.

"Something that I gained from this program is learning and reading in a different way. I was able to read through play scripts." - Student

High School Track

The High School Reading Residency program is a ten week arts integration program, that gives young adults a project-based approach to reading comprehension and social emotional skills.

In the 2018/19 Season, we worked with 12 classrooms in 6 high schools, studying *In The Heights*, *Christmas at Pemberley*, and *Two Trains Running*.

"I thought this really helped open my eyes about community and culture. After all the lessons I really thought more of my culture and i asked myself more questions." - Student

School Partners

Middle School

Acosta Middle School
Audubon Middle School
Auer Avenue School
Bruce Guadalupe Middle School
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. School
Franklin Middle School
Greenfield Middle School
Hartford Avenue University School
Hopkins-Lloyd Community School
Humboldt Park School
Manitoba School
Milwaukee Scholars Charter School
Rogers Street Academy
Story School
Thurston Woods School
Trowbridge School
Wedgewood Park Middle School

High School

Audubon High School
Bay View High School
Carmen High School - South
Hmong American Peace Academy
Milwaukee High School of the Arts
North Division High School



PROGRAM OUTCOMES

GOAL 1: IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION

Objective: Students will increase their ability in Text Evidence

Middle School students from the Reading Residency program answered four questions about the plays both before and after participating in the program. Of the 740 students with matched pre- and post-test scores, 400 students (54.1%) had higher scores on the post-test than on the pre-test. The average pre-test score for matched students was 2.3 while the average post-test score was 2.8. A repeated-measures t-test showed that this improvement was statistically significant.

High School students from the Reading Residency program answered four questions about the plays both before and after participating in the program. Of the 128 High School students with matched pre- and post-test scores, 52 students (40.6%) had higher scores on the post-test than on the pre-test. The average pre-survey score for matched 9th grade students was 2.5 while the average post-test score was 2.8. This test was significant.

GOAL 2: IMPROVE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Objective A: Students will build their Relationship Skills

Of the 718 middle school students with matched pre- and post-survey scores, 331 students (46.1%) had higher scores on the post-survey than on the pre-survey. Of the 116 high school students with matched pre- and post-survey scores, 54 students (46.6%) had higher scores on the post-survey than on the pre-survey.

Objective B: Students will develop their Social Awareness

Of the 727 middle school students with matched pre- and post-survey scores on this survey, 313 students (43.1%) had higher scores on the post-survey than on the pre-survey. Of the 118 high school students with matched pre- and post-survey scores on this survey, 44 students (37.3%) had higher scores on the post-survey than on the pre-survey.

GOAL 3: INCREASE THEATER APPRECIATION

Objective: Students will increase their appreciation and understanding of theater.

There was a notable 50.3% of middle school students that improved from pre- to post-survey.

54.3% of high school students demonstrated an improved score from pre- to post-survey.



ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE

Open-ended responses were included to gain an understanding of **what the students gained from the Reading Residency** program. 775 students completed the post-survey. 457 of them provided responses to the open-ended questions.

The main themes from these responses include: students' feelings towards the program, theater knowledge, emotional growth, skills, lessons from play, and future. Below are the descriptions and explanations for each theme.

I. **Students' feelings towards the program**

42 students described both the plays and the Reading Residency program as enjoyable, fun, and memorable activities. Reasons cited include the support they received from Rep Teaching Artists, music in the play, the experience of watching live theater, and representation on the non-dominant culture.

"I gained an experience that I've never had before both in school and outside of school. I would describe this experience by saying it was relatable, interesting, and funny... Many times during the play I found myself laughing, which is quite rare. Other than the actual play, the program brought something new and fun to the school and the community, something we're lacking."

"This program taught me a lot, but it mostly taught me about the work that is put in for a play. I think that it is important for people to know what that is like so I'm glad that my classmates and I got the opportunity to learn about it."

II. **Theater Knowledge**

68 students described that they had better understanding on play preparation process. These students described their growing knowledge on preparation steps needed to create play, such as production process and actor preparation. 32 students described that they had better understanding on the content of a play. The content of a play in here connected to the story, setting, characters, and author behind the plays.

III. **Emotional Growth**

85 students described the emotional growth categories that they experienced through the program, which are: confidence, collaboration, empathy, trust, independent working, respect to others, attention to detail, courage, and determination. Of note, 41 students describing a growth in confidence through their confidence to speak, present, or perform in front of audience, their confidence in communication skill with their peers or other people, and their ability to share and express feelings and ideas in positive ways. Another highlight is that 18 students specifically cited that they gained better understanding on the concept and feeling of empathy by putting their feet on other people's or play character's shoes and understanding their emotion, feeling, & point of view.

"I learned about how to get into a character and express their feelings and what they would do in a situation."

IV. **Skills**

22 students described increase in skills related to reading, and writing.

"I learned how to analyze and understand why that certain person is feeling the way they are feeling. I also learned how to help that person that is in deep feelings in different ways"

V. **Lessons of the Play**

54 students expressed their takeaways from the play which included how a person can affect their community, diversity and cultural understanding, love, importance of family, respect of women, relationships, and following your dreams.

VI. **Future**

20 students expressed their growing interest in theater, plays, and acting.

"I look forward to going to more Milwaukee REP theatre plays because they really know how to teach a lesson to the audience. This experience was one of a kind and very special to me and my classmates."



SUMMARY

LESSONS LEARNED IN 2018/19

This season continued the pattern of the Reading Residency program yielding positive results. Here are some key lessons we learned this season.

- 1) We do not shy away from challenging classrooms as we strive to bring equitable access to high quality arts programming to all of Milwaukee's young people. In order to provide additional support to our Teaching Artists in some of the more difficult classrooms, we added a full-time School Programs Coordinator. We found this position essential for us to be able to create strong relationships with our school partners and offer flexibility of our full-time staff to respond to the needs of the Teaching Artists throughout the program.



- 2) Our social emotional learning measurement tools continued to improve and it was demonstrated in the data significance tests conducted by the assessment specialists. We will continue to find ways to explicitly focus on social-emotional skill development in the lessons as we move forward.

FUTURE PLANS

With the expansion of the program, having two separate tracks for middle and high school proved challenging. We are eliminating the separate tracks in the 2019/20 Season, and focusing on 50 classrooms in 7th-9th grades. We will have one twenty session curriculum implemented for every grade level to maximize the impact of the program. We are thrilled to conduct the program next season around *West Side Story*, *The Nerd*, and *Eclipsed*.

"Through the rep experience, I was able to understand the play more through the background information. I understood why some characters were felt the way that they felt and did the things that they did. It was truly a memorable experience."

SPONSORS

Thank you to all of our sponsors that allow us to bring this program to so many students throughout Milwaukee. Your generous support has given this opportunity to 1,454 students in 5 classrooms across 52 schools. The depth and breadth of this program put our total number of contact hours at 33,580 for the Reading Residency program.



Thank you

Bader Philanthropies, Einhorn Family Foundation, GMAR Youth and Realtors Association, Greater Milwaukee Foundation, The Harley-Davidson Foundation, Jane Bradley Pettit Foundation, Johnson Controls Foundation, Kohl's Foundation, Northwestern Mutual Foundation, Ralph Evinrude Foundation, United Performing Arts Fund, Wisconsin Energy Corporation Foundation

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