



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Report Shows Integrated Arts and Mental Health Model Drives Measurable Growth in NYC Elementary Students

Four-year study of Partnership with Children's Student Voice and Engagement program shows significant gains in SEL competencies and theater skills among students in Brownsville, Brooklyn

NEW YORK, Sept. 29, 2026 — [Partnership with Children](#) (PWC) today released *Student Voice and Engagement: A Model for Healing-Centered Education*, a report documenting the outcomes of its Student Voice and Engagement (SVE) program. The findings, drawn from 90 independent classroom observations over four years, show measurable and significant results from an integrated model combining theater instruction, social-emotional learning and embedded mental health support.

SVE placed professional teaching artists side by side with PWC's licensed clinical social workers in four schools in Brownsville, Brooklyn: P.S. 165, P.S. 446, P.S. 284 and P.S. 298, all within Community School District 23. A cohort of 175 students moved through the program from second through fifth grade, receiving weekly theater instruction built around the [CASEL 5 framework](#), embedded mental health support and an annual trip to see a Broadway show.

Over the course of the program, students' SEL competencies rose from a 71.7% to an 82.6% mean rating, and theater skill development climbed from 63.2% to 83.0%, both statistically significant gains ($p < .01$). Regression analysis identified consistent classroom opportunities for expression in theater as the single strongest predictor of SEL growth, with the greatest gains occurring in skills educators typically find hardest to teach directly, including analytical concentration (+34.8 points), creative vocal expression (+25.6 points) and social awareness (+15.1 points).

The full report is available at <http://www.partnershipwithchildren.org/SVEResearch>.

"For 118 years, PWC has believed that brilliance doesn't need to be brought into our school communities because it is already there. Our responsibility is to create the conditions that allow it to flourish," said Wesner Pierre, CEO of PWC. "This research gives us more than promising

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results. It gives us evidence that when the arts, social-emotional learning and mental health support are intentionally integrated into the school environment, young people grow. SVE gives us a model, the data to back it up and a pathway to bring what we have learned to more schools and more young people.”

The program was funded by a four-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Assistance for Arts Education program, awarded in 2021 as one of the first initiatives of [PWC's merger with the Center for Arts Education](#). The report's findings were first shared publicly at [SXSW EDU](#), and the full report and appendix were released this week at a briefing hosted by WPP Media in New York City, attended by PWC board members, staff and supporters.

About Partnership with Children

Since 1908, Partnership with Children (PWC) has strengthened the emotional, social, and cognitive skills of children in New York City to succeed in school, society and life. PWC embeds full-time licensed clinical social workers, youth development specialists and teaching artists in schools to provide trauma-informed mental health counseling, family outreach, community-based programming and healing-centered arts education. Last year, PWC’s work impacted over 20,000 children and families across more than 40 NYC public schools.

www.partnershipwithchildren.org

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