

Healing Centered Engagement Impact Report



Arts Ed Newark (AEN) is a collective impact initiative with **100+ arts education champions** — artists, educators, parents, and organizations — united by one belief: **every Newark young person deserves high-quality arts education**. Since 2020, AEN has led a multi-year **Healing Centered Engagement (HCE)** training series for educators, teaching artists, school staff, and community practitioners across Newark, New Jersey and beyond.



WHAT THE DATA SHOW Consistent findings 2020–2024

Every year, participants complete pre- and post-surveys. The findings below **have held across all cohorts** without a single outlier year, but durable patterns confirmed by hundreds of responses across Newark, New Jersey, and beyond.

► Knowledge gains are significant and measurable.

Participants reporting they know "a lot" about trauma jumped from 11% pre-training to 60% post-training. Knowledge about trauma's impact on youth rose from 15% to 68%. Statistical testing confirmed these gains ($p = 0.001$ and $p = 0.003$).

► Confidence to work with trauma-impacted youth rises.

42% of participants felt confident before training. After training, 68–80% reported confidence, and no one reported being "not at all confident."

► Intentional arts use in HCE curriculum nearly doubles.

Before training, 30% intentionally used the arts in trauma-informed work. After, 57% reported intentional or centerpiece use of the arts.

► 100% gained tools. Zero exceptions.

Across every cohort, every training format, and every year, 100% of post-survey respondents reported gaining new tools and strategies to work with trauma-impacted youth.

Across all four years and training formats, Arts Ed Newark's HCE programming demonstrates that **the arts are not merely supplemental to trauma-informed care—they are central to it**. Participants consistently gain not only knowledge, but transformed perspectives on their students, their practice, and themselves.

PARTICIPANT VOICES

"I will tread more lightly with students displaying 'misbehavior'... and recognize that it could actually be their way of dealing with trauma." — 2020 Participant

"I am more patient, accepting and understanding." — 2022–23 Participant

"I now understand what it means to create a safe and healing-centered space through my art form." — NJ Educator Participant

THE ROLE OF ARTS IN HEALING CENTERED PRACTICE

Across all cohorts, participants overwhelmingly agreed that arts education is integral, not ancillary, to trauma informed work. The following beliefs were strongly endorsed:

- ✓ Arts provide a vital outlet for youth self-expression
- ✓ Arts education can help regulate the nervous system
- ✓ Arts education builds resilience in youth
- ✓ Arts education is an effective self-care tool for educators
- ✓ Arts create conditions for psychological safety in classrooms
- ✓ Arts-based approaches affirm student identities and cultures

Agreement ratings were highest for 'Arts provide an outlet for self-expression' and 'Arts build resilience,' with Strongly Agree dominating across all demographic groups.

POPULATIONS & REACH

- Teaching artists and classroom teachers (Pre-K through college)
- School administrators, counselors, social workers
- Non-profit staff and community volunteers
- Districts: Newark (NJ), Bridgeton (NJ), Camden (NJ), Paterson (NJ), Trenton (NJ), Hamilton Township (NJ), Anaheim (CA), and Miami-Dade (FL)

KEY TRAINING THEMES

Each training series covered core domains, customized to the community served:

Understanding Trauma

Definitions, types, ACEs, the brain's stress response, and generational trauma

Recognizing Trauma Responses

Trauma-informed behavioral lens; distinguishing behavior from dysregulation

Healing Centered Approaches

Centering joy, identity, culture, and agency alongside safety

The Role of Arts

Arts as nervous system regulation, self-expression, and community healing

Practitioner Self-Care

Secondary trauma, vicarious trauma, and sustainable practice strategies

Application & Lesson Design

Translating principles into classroom and community arts programming

WHY IT MATTERS | SUPPORT THIS WORK

Children everywhere face significant exposure to trauma. AEN's Healing Centered Engagement training equips educators and artists to use the arts as a tool for healing and resilience. To sponsor cohorts, fund HCE training, or learn more visit us at www.artsednewark.org/healing.