

# SummerQUEST 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.** AEN has partnered with the **Newark Board of Education (NBOE)** since **2013** — first as *Summer Plus*, now as *SummerQUEST*. Beginning in **2017**, AEN began measuring impact through annual student surveys. Eight consecutive years of data tell a clear and consistent story: **summer arts instruction works.**

8

years of survey evaluation (2017–2025)

15

school sites (SummerQUEST 2025)

~21,000

Total participants (2012-2025)

14,107

surveys collected since 2017

30%+

first-ever arts experience

## WHAT THE DATA SHOW

Eight consistent findings from 2017–2025

Every year, students complete pre- and post-surveys. The findings below **have held across all eight years** — not a single good summer, but durable patterns confirmed by thousands of responses across up to 15 sites.

### ► Students grow their confidence and positive self-image.

Post-survey respondents **consistently report the program made them think of themselves more positively.** In 2021, 77% of students reported high satisfaction. In 2024, matched data showed significant increases in students identifying as Artistic, Committed, Compassionate, Confident, Curious, and Observant.

### ► Making new friends is the top-rated outcome — every year.

From 2017 through 2025, "I made new friends" received the highest weighted average of all post-survey statements every single year. Arts-making is inherently collaborative, and it builds social capital that students carry beyond the summer.

*"This experience made me think of myself more positively."*  
— SummerQUEST Student

### ► The arts support social-emotional wellbeing — even in a crisis.

During COVID-19 in 2020, programming moved fully online. **Students still reported the arts gave them joy, helped them express feelings, and helped them cope with being away from friends.** Parents echoed this. The program demonstrated resilience — a critical quality for any sustained public investment.

► **Students develop identity as artists and creative thinkers.**

Matched survey analysis in 2023 found the greatest SEL increases in "I think of myself as an artist" and "I like to create things." In 2025, students showed gains in "People listen to what I have to say" — a self-advocacy indicator linked to academic and civic engagement.

► **Parental arts engagement amplifies student outcomes.**

Confirmed every year: students whose parents are professional artists or engaged with the arts score higher on every social-emotional indicator — more creative, more confident, more interested in the arts. This makes a powerful case for community-wide, not just school-based, investment.

*"Participating in the arts gave them joy; allowed them to express their feelings; and helped them cope with being away from friends."*

— Parent/Guardian, Summer 2020 Evaluation

► **Program satisfaction has been consistently high.**

Post-survey satisfaction was measured in 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025. (No post-survey was administered in 2020 due to the pandemic format.) In every year measured, results ranged from Satisfied to Very Satisfied across all program sites. The most positive sites shift year to year, but the program-wide pattern reflects sustained quality.

► **Students consistently want to return.**

In every year of post-survey data, students agreed with the statement "I want to participate in SummerQUEST next year." This indicator has been positive across all sites in all years — confirming that the program experience resonates deeply with the young people it serves, year after year.

► **Listening to music is students' top coping strategy — year after year.**

Every year since 2021, "Listen to music" has been the #1 response when students are asked what they do to calm down when stressed or upset. This consistent finding speaks to the profound role the arts play in youth

mental health and daily life — well beyond the walls of any classroom or summer program.

*"I made new friends through this experience. It made me think in new ways."* — SummerQUEST student

Summer Plus / SummerQUEST has grown from its **2013 pilot** launch to serve **~2,700 students daily** across 15 school sites in 2025. The evaluation infrastructure, built since **2017**, provides a rare multi-year dataset for a city-based arts initiative — and the results are consistent: **arts instruction changes outcomes.**

► **WHY THIS MATTERS**

For many Newark students, SummerQUEST is their **only structured access to arts education.**

More than half of participants each year report this as their very first arts experience. The evidence is clear: when young people are given consistent, high-quality arts instruction, they grow — as students, as artists, and as members of their community.



Arts Ed Newark invites **fundors, policymakers, and community partners** to build on this foundation. Eight consecutive years of rigorous survey evaluation demonstrate that this investment delivers measurable, meaningful, and lasting change for Newark's young people. To sponsor programming or learn more visit us at [www.artsednewark.org](http://www.artsednewark.org).