



**ARTS CORPS  
YEAR 14**



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Elizabeth Whitford, Arts Corps, Executive Director

## **DEAR COMMUNITY,**

What does it take to learn something? To persist?  
To transform?

Again and again at Arts Corps, we witness so many examples of powerful learning, persistence and transformation. ►

This year Arts Corps served

**1,919**

students through **143** classes at **34** sites.

“One student always had a hard time sticking with his project due to frustration with his work. But when the class began painting, he was captivated and did not want to stop.”

“Students have stopped saying, ‘I can’t do this.’ They are more confident, courageous and are more open to taking risks to explore unfamiliar art language and learn new skills.”

“A student that swore she would never sing a solo performed her first solo ever...on stage.”

These transformations occur in the face of real risk. To learn, we must risk failure as we step into the unknown. Persisting in the face of obstacles ups the ante on that risk—to risk failing when we are trying our best involves immense vulnerability.

To take these risks, our students—and all of us—need to believe it is worth it, that it is possible to improve and succeed through effort. We need mentors and peer role models. We need to be able to take it one step at a time, and we need feedback and acknowledgment for our efforts rather than our successes. We need the learning to be relevant to our lives.

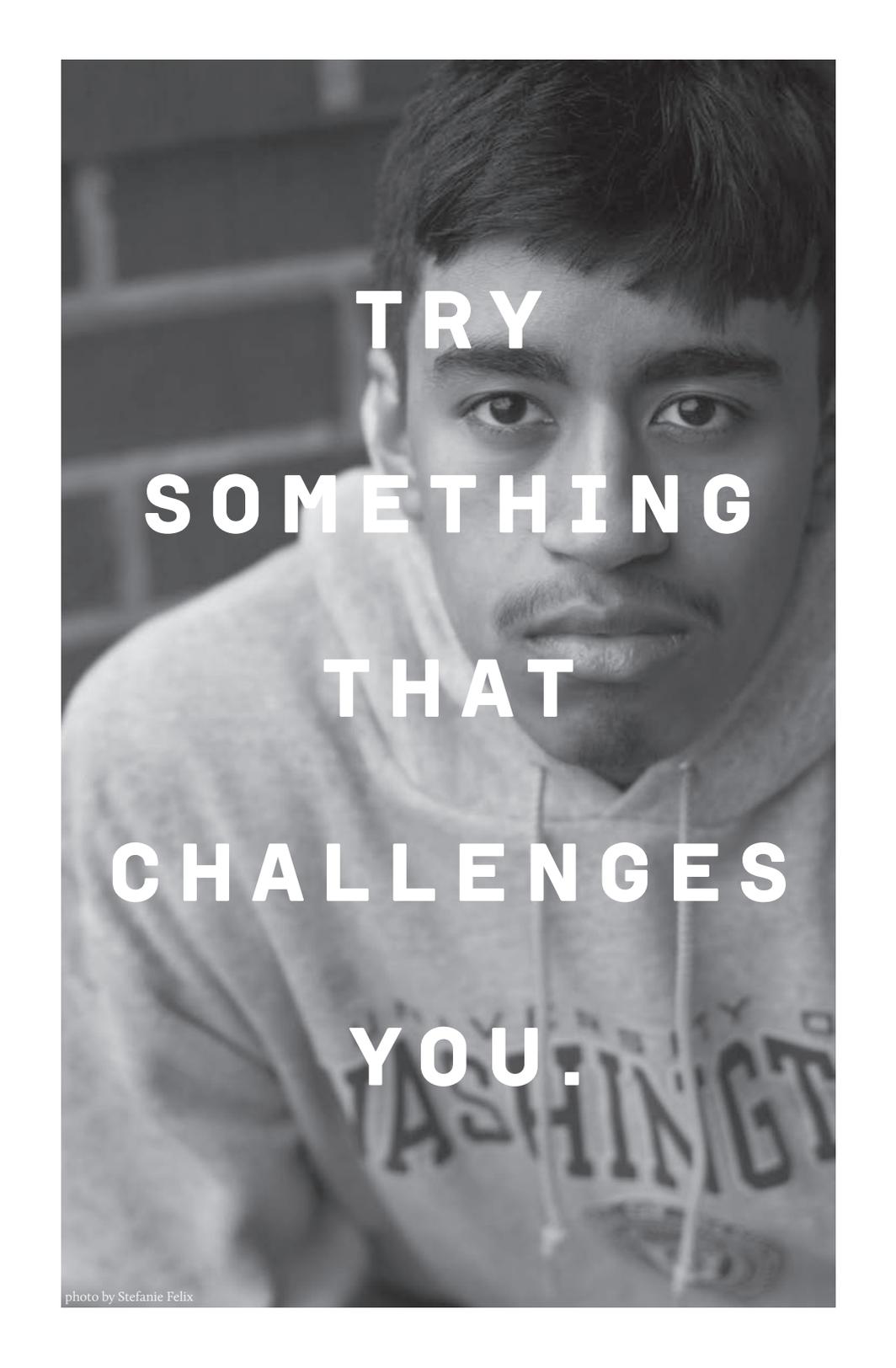
These are the conditions that Arts Corps teaching artists create for their students, inspiring in them a willingness to take a risk. In doing so, we foster an orientation toward learning and persistence, that when combined with the invitation to imagine, think critically and create, produces the conditions for personal and collective transformation.

Through Arts Corps, youth facing systemic oppression gain an identity as creators, achievers and leaders. Through our arts integration programs, youth gain a greater sense of belonging, engagement and motivation in their school community. Through our teen programs, youth learn to use their leadership and their voice to create a more just and vibrant community.

**With your support,  
Arts Corps continues to  
create the conditions  
for powerful learning,  
persistence and  
transformation, so all  
youth can reach their  
full potential.**

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Whitford





**TRY  
SOMETHING  
THAT  
CHALLENGES  
YOU.**

**81%** of youth served by Arts Corps are youth of color. **72%** of youth served by Arts Corps are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, an indicator of family poverty.

Carlos Nieto seems at home in front of a crowd. As a slam poet, he shares his words with immense power. His delivery has a natural flair, and he's clearly confident. By his own admission, this wasn't always the case.

It all started sophomore year in high school, when a friend took him to a Youth Speaks Seattle poetry slam. He found himself captivated by the way poets were able to communicate about issues that were important to them.

"I didn't know how to talk about things. Having a conversation about politics—I feel like I couldn't do well in it," he says. **"With poetry I can speak about issues in a way I feel confident about."**

Since then, Carlos has immersed himself in poetry. He started attending slams regularly, and writing his own pieces. At first, it was intimidating to perform them in front of others. He would only share his work with friends—people he could be vulnerable around without fear of criticism.

"The more I performed [at open mics], the more I felt comfortable with people I didn't know in the crowd," he says. "The energy in the room reinforces that, 'yeah, I'm a writer.'"

Taking risks and speaking truth to an ever-growing audience is now a way of life. The sense of community Carlos found at Youth Speaks Seattle played a big part in this transformation, as did the support he received from his friends and family.

Carlos is now a fixture in the slam community. Last year, he made Youth Speaks Seattle's slam team, and traveled to Philadelphia to compete in Brave New Voices—an international youth poetry competition. Carlos is currently studying Environmental Science and Resource Management at the University of Washington, and he hopes to remain involved in Youth Speaks Seattle as a coach or mentor in years to come.

"I just want to help people. I just want to give back," he says.

- Carlos Nieto, poet,  
Youth Speaks Seattle alum,  
UW student



**SHARE  
SOMETHING  
THAT  
UNVEILS  
YOUR TRUTH.**

**91%** of students who did not believe that the statement “I finish whatever I begin” described them prior to participation in an Arts Corps class reported growth in this important indicator of persistence after their Arts Corps class.

Daddy I forgave you

But the scars you left didn't,  
The open door in my room didn't,  
The old dishes in the kitchen didn't,  
The clothes hung in your closet didn't,  
The letters you never sent didn't,  
The little girl inside me still waiting for you to come home didn't

But Dear Daddy,

Today I ran the 5k and got first place and broke the record  
and I play the cello  
and today I helped an elderly woman up a steep hill  
and did I mention I'm in high school?  
and I learned to ride the metro by myself  
and I beat my stage fright  
and did I mention I'm in high school?

Am I loud enough for you Daddy?

**I learned how to love and I know how  
to forgive** and I know it's only been 4 years Daddy...

But I still miss you

-Deqa Mumin, Youth Speaks Seattle poet and student,  
Cleveland High School



©Keelin Everly-Lang

Deqa Mumin didn't identify as a poet until she became involved with Youth Speaks Seattle. After witnessing her first poetry slam in 2013, she jumped in to writing and performing her own poetry with intensity and raw vulnerability. In one year, her honest voice, personal bravery and persistence won her a spot on the Seattle Slam Team at Brave New Voices.



**MAKE  
SOMETHING  
THAT IS  
YOUR OWN.**

*Students that were reluctant to begin or try something new in the arts began to develop confidence in themselves. Students also looked forward to the days our artist came in. Students tried not to be absent on those days.*

**- HIGHLINE  
PROGRAM PARTNER**

Ella Li is an 8th grade student who has thrived academically and personally through arts integrated learning opportunities at her school, Orca K-8, one of Arts Corps' Creative Schools Initiative pilot sites.

**“Making art to me is special. I think [it’s] the feeling of creating something that’s my own—that I have my own effect on, that can only be done by me,”** says Ella. “When I think of art, I think creativity but I think also acceptance and I think controversy and I think all these things that mix together to make a person and help them do what they want and say what they want to say.”

To illustrate her point, Ella shares a story about a troubled student in her 6th grade class, who she says was deeply impacted by the influence of Arts Corps teaching artist, Nate Herth.

“There was this kid that everyone knows has troubles, and you can tell is just really kind of sad. When Arts Corps came, this person started really opening

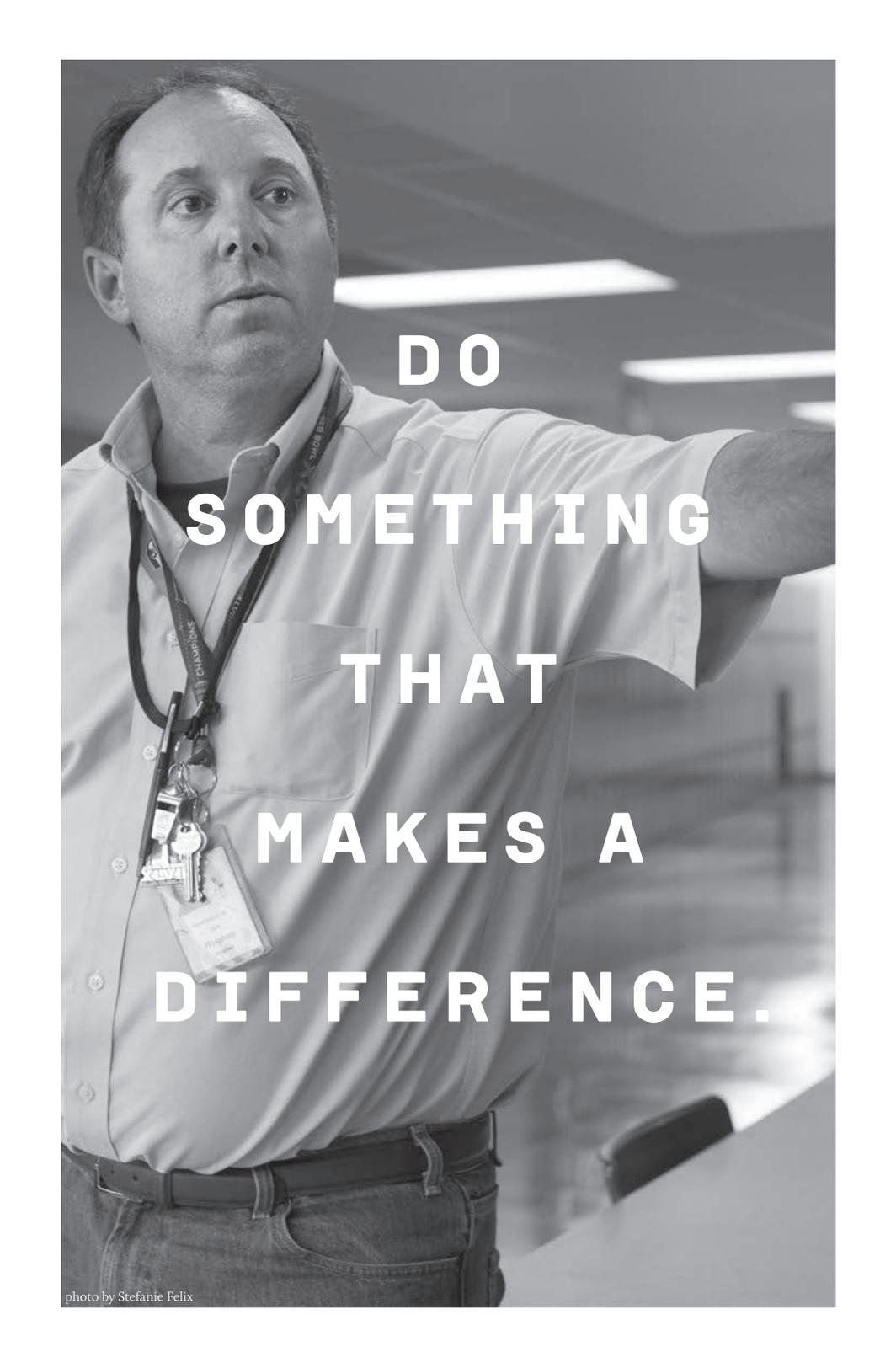
up to people.” Ella talks about how they began making art and sharing it with other students. They were able to connect with their peers in a way that they hadn’t been able to do previously. “I think [making art] made them think more highly of themselves and [they] just look at things a little bit differently. I mean they’re not a different person of course, but it changed part of them thinking that they weren’t good enough.”

“I don’t know how to explain it; [making art is] just...different. You form these thoughts and you form these dreams and you form the way you look at things, and you just combine them to make this awesome piece of inspiration. It’s important to me because I think that’s how I get a lot of my emotions out and figure out what I’m feeling,” Ella says. “That’s a big thing.”

**- Ella Li, student, Orca K-8**



Teaching artist, Nate Herth



**DO  
SOMETHING  
THAT  
MAKES A  
DIFFERENCE.**

*[The best thing about CSI is] getting us all to connect with each other and listen – sometimes I have days that I don't care what other students and teachers say, but now I have more of the days when I care and I listen.*

**- STUDENT, CREATIVE SCHOOLS INITIATIVE, MADRONA K-8**

Jon Hughes used to practice law. Then his oldest child entered kindergarten, and it changed his life. He started volunteering at his kid's school and he realized he wanted to be a teacher.

In 2011, Jon began teaching 7th and 8th grade at Madrona K-8 and saw first-hand the challenges students face in the education system—the lack of funding, the large classrooms, the focus on testing. He sees students falling through the cracks.

**“When [schools] are cutting back, [they] drop things. The priority is the test scores—not student learning,”** he says. The focus on testing and remedial classwork makes some students dread the school day—it's a constant reminder of the subjects they're not already good at.

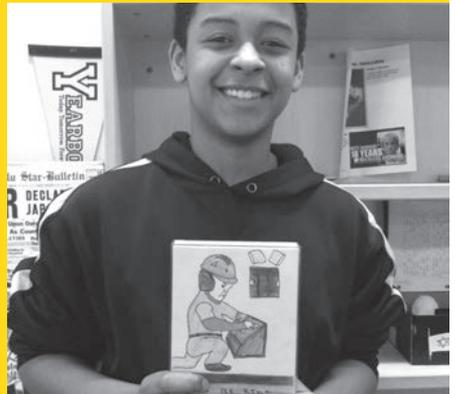
Then two years ago, his principal told him about a program that would place a teaching artist in his classroom throughout the school year to help infuse arts learning into his lesson plans. While his colleagues initially felt cautious about this new initiative,

Jon jumped at the opportunity, stepping in as the lead teacher for Arts Corps' Creative Schools Initiative at his school.

“Having Arts Corps teachers here, you can see the excitement [students] get,” he says. “If you can make it energetic, with exciting things for them to do, they're more engaged; they're more likely to do the work. And art fits that role.”

Jon has found that his students are becoming excited about school again, eager to get back to their projects. And that makes him feel satisfied, despite the pay cut and longer hours that now make up his workday. “It's way harder to be a teacher than it was a lawyer. But I'm liking what I'm doing.”

**-Jon Hughes, parent and teacher, Madrona K-8 and Arts Corps partner**



Madrona K-8 student



**EXPLORE  
SOMETHING  
THAT WILL  
INSPIRE YOUR  
FUTURE.**

As a kid, Monique Chatterjee spent a lot of time in her family's garage.

"I would rush to do my homework so that I could get time after dinner to paint in the garage all night. It was my favorite place to be," she says.

Out there, as she painted, alone, she felt a sense of belonging and a connection—with herself.

**"Art saved my life. I didn't feel a sense of community when I was young until I found art," she recalls. "It makes you realize your value. Without it, I wouldn't know who I was."**

Although her parents didn't fully understand her interest in art, Monique continued to explore her own creativity, studying industrial design in college and eventually becoming a designer at Microsoft.

Looking back, she realizes that the person that had the greatest influence on her path was her high school art teacher.

"She was my number one supporter. She would tell me I could do anything. It was really important for me to have that perspective, because without her, I wouldn't be doing what I am today."

Monique's exploration of art helped uncover her identity as an artist and a person.

"Having access to all the arts classes in school, that's pretty much the foundation I had for everything," she says. "And that's why I say that art saved my life, because I can't even imagine life [without it]."

**Monique Chatterjee**  
Industrial Designer, Microsoft,  
and Arts Corps donor

[www.artscorps.org/year14](http://www.artscorps.org/year14)



Orca K-8, drama club

*Younger students rush quickly from their class at the end of the day because they are eager to get to their visual arts class. Their artwork has been displayed around the school through out the year. I've seen children proudly showing their artwork to their parents.*

**— SEATTLE PROGRAM PARTNER**

## **YOUR TURN TO CREATE SOMETHING.**

Use this postcard to write, draw, collage something. Then send it to us. We'll share your creativity on our blog. It'll be fun, or scary. Either way, this is your invitation to take a risk.

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE



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[www.artscorps.org/year14](http://www.artscorps.org/year14)