

Youth Arts Impact Network: The Art of “Belonging”

“Belonging...It looks like friendship. It feels like comfort.

It smells like a campfire. It tastes like a family recipe. It sounds like laughter.” - CYD Practitioner

On October 4, 2023, the [Youth Arts Impact Network](#), facilitated by [EdVestors](#) and the [Mass Cultural Council](#), convened over 50 creative youth development (CYD) supporters. Inspired by the [Surgeon General's Advisory on Loneliness](#), and responding to the mental health crisis that 86% of Mass Cultural Council YouthReach grantees reported in the FY23 [YouthReach report](#), CYD practitioners, administrators, researchers, and alums created art and words centering on what they do to help young people find “[Keys to Belonging](#)” in their organizations and communities and what would help unlock opportunities to create more belonging. The two finished pieces, 15" x 80" combined with many written responses, contained the following themes.

Question 1: How do you currently help young people feel that they belong?

- Ask and listen
- Offer an open, supportive, welcoming environment
- Foster identity and connection
- Provide opportunities and ownership

“Creating all original work by teens, and using their voices to advocate, perform, create. Provide open spaces for open dialogue about topics that matter to them. Have them create their own guidelines and program boundaries.” - CYD Practitioner

Question 2: What would help? What doors need to be opened or keys obtained?

We need to “enlarge the capacity to retain the workforce” and have greater access to:

- Funding, trainings, and support
- Connection and collaboration
- Transportation
- Resources and opportunities

**We would
like to
thank all
those who
gave voice
and vision
to our
questions**



Participating Arts Partners:

2nd Act*
Actors' Shakespeare Project*
ARCK: Art Resource Collaborative for Kids*
Artists For Humanity (AFH)*
Arts for Learning MA (formerly Young Audiences)*
Berklee College of Music / The Hip Hop Transformation*
Boch Center*
Boston City Singers*
Boston Lyric Opera*
Boston Music Project*
Boston Raising Powerful Musicians*
Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra*
Community Music Center of Boston*
Community Music School of Springfield, Springfield, MA
Company One Theatre*
Follow Your Art Community Studios, Melrose, MA
Institute of Contemporary Art*
Mass Poetry*
MASSCreative*
New Art Center, Newton, MA
New England Conservatory*
Open Door Arts*
Partners for Youth with Disabilities, Somerville, MA
Project STEP*
Raw Art Works, Lynn, MA
Rehearsal for Life*
Sociedad Latina*
SPOKE Art Inc.*
The Art Garden, Inc., Shelburne Falls, MA
Urbano Project*
Worcester Chamber Music Society, Worcester, MA
Zumix*

*Boston based organization





Keys to Belonging, CYD



Keys for Unlocking, CYD