

**Perspectives  
On The  
Broadway Junior Program  
In  
Three New York City Public Schools**

**Dr. Rob Horowitz  
Researcher**

**Research Associates:  
Maggie Fishman  
Amy Kleiman**

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**The Broadway Junior Program:  
Summary of Key Findings from a Two-Year Evaluation  
Robert Horowitz, Ed.D.**

Broadway Junior is a program of Music Theatre International (MTI), a dramatic licensing agency specializing in Broadway, Off Broadway, and West End musicals. Broadway Junior provides elementary and middle schools with a package of materials to produce condensed versions of musicals, such as *Annie*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Into The Woods*, and *Fiddler On The Roof*. For the last two years, we evaluated the Broadway Junior program in three New York City schools: PS 94 (Brooklyn), PS 176 (Manhattan) and East Side Middle (Manhattan).

**Quality of Program and Materials**

- Broadway Junior provides an exceptional set of books and materials to guide production of the musicals. These resources are comprehensive, well organized, and attractively produced. Materials include librettos, vocal books, piano/vocal scores, a Director’s guide, Cross-Curricular Activities and Enrichment Guide, Performance/Accompaniment CDs, Production Handbook, and a Choreography Video. These resources provide excellent support for schools to rehearse and stage the musicals.

**Impact on Students**

- Children participating in the program demonstrated personal growth in several areas. We observed improvement in self-confidence, positive risk-taking, motivation, self-discipline, and social behavior. Children learned that they needed to work hard on their roles over several months, developing focus and discipline.
- Children demonstrated improvement in social skills and relations with others, including teachers, administrators and peers. They developed cooperative learning skills, new kinds of relationships with adults, and new perceptions of their peers. The rehearsals provided a unique school opportunity to work collaboratively on a challenging long-term project with students from other grades. Many children were engaged in a variety of backstage and production tasks besides performing. They learned that they must all work as a team to develop a successful performance.
- Children were challenged to integrate learning from different disciplines – such as the performing arts, language and culture – as they developed their roles. This process of thinking and performing across domains of learning supported the development of general cognitive skills. These include creative thinking abilities, such as originality and elaboration (the ability to add detail in one’s creative work, going beyond minimal expectations), and the ability to synthesize, represent and express knowledge and ideas.
- Children developed a variety of skills within the performing arts disciplines of music, dance, and theater.
- Although our evaluation was not designed to track academic improvement, the rehearsals supported development of English Language Arts skills, such as speaking, listening, vocabulary, diction, meaning and interpretation of a text, narrative, and character development.

**Impact on the School Community**

- The program had a positive impact on school climate. Teachers and students interacted in new and positive ways. Teachers saw aspects of children they otherwise might not have been exposed to. The school community grew stronger and more cohesive. Parents strongly participated in various roles, including costume design and production.

## **Perspectives on the Broadway Junior Program in Three New York City Public Schools**

Dr. Rob Horowitz

### The Broadway Junior Program and This Year's Study

Broadway Junior is a program of Music Theatre International (MTI), a dramatic licensing agency specializing in Broadway, Off Broadway, and West End musicals. Broadway Junior provides elementary and middle schools with a package of materials to produce condensed versions of musicals, such as *Annie*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Into The Woods*, and *Fiddler On The Roof*.

During the 2000-2001 school year we conducted a qualitative study in three New York City public schools that produced Broadway Junior musicals, PS 94 in the Sunset Park section of Brooklyn, East Side Middle School in Manhattan, and PS 176 in the Inwood section of Manhattan<sup>1</sup> This year we continued our research in these three schools as they staged productions of *The Music Man* and *Schoolhouse Rock Live*.

Basic demographic information for these schools can help put the program's target population in context. East Side Middle school, in Manhattan's Upper East Side, serves 394 children, 46.2% of whom are eligible for a free lunch. Free lunch eligibility is a commonly used poverty index for comparing the socio-economic status of students in public schools. In terms of ethnicity, 57.9% of East Side Middle School's students are white, 12.2% black, 16.2% Latino, and 13.7% are Asian or classified as "Other." Academically, East Side Middle School stands out as a high-performing public school in New York City, with 84.2% of its students passing or excelling in state and city administered tests.

At W. Haywood Burns School (PS 176) in Manhattan's Inwood neighborhood, 69.5% of its 660 students are eligible for free lunches, and the student body is 17.4% white, 11.8% black, 67.3% Latino, and 3.5% Asian or "Other." In terms of academic performance, 38.1% of students pass or excel in state and city administered standardized tests in English, and 31.5% pass or excel in mathematics.

At Henry Longfellow School (PS 94) in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, 91% of its 1378 students are eligible for a free lunch. The school is primarily comprised of students of Latino (67.6%) and Asian (24.4%) background. White students make up 6.7% of the school's population and black students, 1.4%. Academically, 43.2% of the students are passing or excelling in city and state standardized tests administered in English, and 43.3% passing or excelling in mathematics.

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<sup>1</sup> Horowitz, R. (2001). *Evaluation of the Broadway Junior – ArtsConnection Program in Three New York City Public Schools*. New York: Music Theater International,

ArtsConnection implemented and coordinated the Broadway Junior projects in the three schools. It provided artistic support and administrative staff, and directed the project from its planning stages to rehearsals and final performance. Each school worked with an ArtsConnection Director, Musical Director, and Choreographer. Planning, scheduling, and administrative details were coordinated by an ArtsConnection Program Manager. Each school provided a coordinating teacher and adequate space for rehearsals and performance.

Each school received a Broadway Junior Showkit. The Showkit is a package of materials needed for staging a production. The materials include Student Libretto/Vocal Books, Piano/Vocal Scores, Director's Guide, Cross-Curricular Activities and Enrichment Guide, Performance/Accompaniment CDs, Production Handbook, and a Choreography Video.

This year we were interested in learning more about the perceptions of the various adults who participated in or observed the Broadway Junior rehearsals and productions. Therefore, we interviewed teachers, parents, and principals in the three schools. We also sent a survey to the parents of the young performers.

This report presents their perspectives on the Broadway Junior program.

## Children's Experiences: Reflection, Growth and Learning

After the children in one school finished their last production of the year they gathered for a 'reflection' – a meeting where they talked about what they had experienced as they rehearsed and then performed the show. The thrill of the kids after the performance was palpable. It was clear from the way they spoke to each other and respected the directions of the teachers that they had developed into a real team. Many of the students remarked on their feelings of belonging to the group.

The kids were obviously excited. A teacher suggested they put their heads down and breathe in and out slowly to calm themselves down. Then Victor Maog, the Director, sat in front of them and asked them to say one word to express how they felt. Each child had a turn: *Excited, nervously excited, embarrassed, fun, nervous, glad, scary, awesome, proud, hyper, electricity, hurray.*

The teachers in the room offered their responses: *stupendous, fabulous and scintillating.*

After lunch, they sat in a circle on the stage of the auditorium. Victor asked them to close their eyes, drop their heads and raise their hands, in turn, to show whether they thought they had changed a little, pretty much, or a lot. They all raised their hands for "a lot."

He asked, “What’s the difference in you now?” They answered:

- *I used to be really shy. Now I know you guys and can tell you how I feel and stuff.*
- *Before I wasn’t confident about performing. Now I can give it 100%. I’m not scared ‘cause I know I’ll do good.*
- *I used to be nervous sometimes. Now I’m used to it, ‘cause we’ve done seven shows already!*
- *I didn’t use energy before. Now I use a lot of energy.*
- *I wasn’t a dancer before. Now I can dance. I’m not shy anymore.*

“What do you know now about yourself, apart from your talents?” Victor asked.

- *Before I had low self-esteem. I didn’t believe in myself. I was sure I would mess up. You all were teaching us to go with the flow. Don’t let anything stop you. There could be bombs going off, the World Trade Center disaster, you sing no matter what!*
- *I, too, didn’t have self-esteem. I thought I couldn’t do anything. Now I’ve done seven shows. I have to believe in myself.*
- *I know more about my talent. In Junior High I won’t be shy to participate if there’s a musical or something.*

“Imagine if you were a fourth or fifth grader who just saw the show. What do you think surprised you in the show? What do you think you would have liked?”

- *Everything. That someone in your class who normally is annoying to you and won’t leave you alone, then they see you up there and they get jealous of you!*
- *They liked the way we had our attitude, the way we performed it.*
- *They liked the beat of [the song] ‘Conjunction Junction.’ They were clapping!*

“What do you think your classmates found out about you?”

- *When the papers came back telling who was in the program, they were like “I don’t think she’s talented, she never participates.” Now they see they’re wrong. She has a lot of energy and is a talented person.*
- *Now I have attitude. I can be nice and quiet and I can have attitude.*
- *Everyone in the class said, “Oh, it’s gonna be boring.” Then they saw it!*
- *Before they didn’t know I was a good actor. Now they know I’m a good actor.*

The reflection session continued. Victor asked about their academic work. “Did being in this program affect your participation in your regular schoolwork and in the classroom?”

- *I didn't participate before. Now I do. This helped. My head was always in the clouds. Now my attention is on the teachers. Now I can focus.*
- *Me too. I used to look around and out the window when the teacher was talking. Now I focus on the teacher and so I learn more stuff.*
- *We put our focus straight on what we have to do.*
- *I used to be afraid to read in front of the class. Now that I've been performing, I've seen getting in front of the class is the same thing, so I am focused.*
- *I used to be the bad guy. Now I'm a good guy in class. It used to be that the teacher was always paying more attention to me. She used to always be looking at me. I used to always be bad. Now I'm a good kid...I take deep breaths when I'm mad.*

Victor then asked what had most surprised them about the production.

- *When everyone was clapping and then laughing. It was so exciting because they didn't boo us!*
- *That my friends were there to cheer me on.*
- *My cousin grabbed me and hugged me so hard! He wouldn't normally do that.*
- *Our friends were surprised and so excited.*
- *I was surprised by the audience participation. They were laughing and moving with us.*
- *We made it through with no show stoppers! [meaning no songs that fell apart in the middle]*

Obviously, the children were deeply affected by their experiences. They had worked hard for many weeks on the production, learning lines, songs, dances, characterization and much more. They had given several performances for their peers, families and teachers and now were trying to encapsulate their feelings with one word. Certainly not an easy task.

The children in the reflection meeting spoke about making new friends and about the sense of family within the group. At first, the children pointed to the talents they never knew they had as the principal benefit the program. But when questioned directly about how they had grown as people, they were quite articulate about many of the other changes that they had noticed in themselves.

The yearlong nature of Broadway Junior may be one of its most significant positive traits; the fact that children were chosen to participate and had the choice themselves of whether to stay in the production clearly contributed to their own sense of self-worth and appreciation of the program. Several students were grateful and proud that they'd chosen to stay with it despite disparaging remarks of peers, or boredom with some of the activities, or frustration with the hard work.

The performance aspect was also key: children could build their skills and talents over time, and build the sense of group commitment, and thus feel confident to perform in front of peers. It was a huge achievement that they had felt so vulnerable at first, but then persevered. They spoke of realizing that “if you stick with it long enough, you can do it.”

The lesson of discipline, commitment, and staying power were as important as discovering their hidden talents. The camaraderie and supportiveness of the kids to each other were also important. Through their experience, they built a small community that was able to help them persevere and ultimately perform the show for their parents, peers and teachers.

This community of young performers was in a sense a microcosm of our larger society, and in a manner that is truly an exception to the typical school experience. Each participant had to discover their own way to make a unique contribution to the success of the final performances. In addition to acting and singing, children prepared props, gave stage directions, worked on scenery, and much more, all for a common effort. Ultimately, they learned to rely on each other’s contribution, as they gained skills and confidence in their roles. Another unique aspect of the production community was its diversity, across ages and grades, gender, background and ethnicity. Parents contributed as well, preparing costumes and selling tickets. Few programs in schools call on this kind of coordinated effort, and with such high standards of performance.

In this study, we present the perspectives of various grownups on how working on the productions affected the children. As much as possible, we use the words of the adults, obtained through observation, interview and survey. Through their descriptions we can try to understand the changes that the students went through, and better understand their experiences.

In the excerpts from interview transcripts, **P** indicates a parent, **T** indicates a teacher, **C** indicates a child, and **I** indicates the interviewer. Italicized passages are excerpts from interviews or comments made during site observations.

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## Motivation, Persistence and Self-Discipline

Many parents and teachers spoke to us about how the collective effort at learning skills, rehearsing, and developing the performance required focus, discipline and motivation. Children developed an increased ability to stay on task as they attempted to master difficult artistic and performing skills. They needed to make a strong commitment to the production despite competing demands on their time and interest.

Some children found this kind of focus easier than others. For instance, a parent of a seventh grader talked about her daughter’s experience with Broadway Junior. The parent noted that her child had a background in theater and a strong interest in the discipline.

- I: Was it hard for her to learn all the lines and the songs?
- P: I have to say, I was just talking about this with a friend the other day. J\_\_\_\_\_’s an excellent student...but of course school is school, no matter what. So, when it comes to a test or something there can be moaning and groaning. However, when she comes home with a script, particularly for this production, she comes home, whips it out, and is so excited about both the songs and the lines. And in my mind, practically memorizes it overnight along with everybody else’s parts. [She] gets familiar with everyone’s roles. So, to answer your original question, it requires a lot of work, but she doesn’t look at it like hard work. She just enjoys it. It certainly takes time, but it’s something she looks forward to.

It’s difficult to generalize about the source of each child’s motivation. We heard one story of how several children had dropped out of last year’s production, but were angry and envious when they saw the show. So they decided to participate this year, and channel that anger into a successful performance.

- T1: We had a couple of kids then who had gone in and had started with *Guys and Dolls*, and then had dropped out.
- T2: Yeah. And they were angry when they saw the performance, and said...
- T1: And then came and did this and stuck with it.
- I: Oh, really?
- T1: Yes, they did. We had three or four of those...I mean, they were really mad.
- T2: Some were really upset because they wanted to be in it.
- T1: They were so jealous. And it was a healthy jealousy. Look how well they directed their feelings of envy. It was pretty terrific.
- I: And they turned around and did it.
- T1: Turned around and did it. And they remembered it, they stuck with it. Which was pretty cool...

A collaborating teacher explained that although a group of students left the show, those that stayed learned the value of discipline and commitment.

*But the really dedicated ones stayed. They learned a lot about discipline. They saw that if they stuck it out – stuck with it – it would be rewarding. In my fourth grade class, I had three kids who were in the show. They didn’t necessarily change because they didn’t need to change. They were just very dedicated to the process. They showed up at every rehearsal. It was a great experience for them.*

A teacher described a difficult student who was able to learn to work effectively in the production.

*He really got into it and managed to keep it together. He was a real discipline problem in the beginning. But in the show itself, he was a real clutch performer. His talent showed.*

A school principal explained how the collaborative focus of the group helped build a sense of community among the kids.

*They need to develop a lot of staying power. The show requires commitment. For the first few months they don't see a show, just the preparations, exercises, vocalizing, and warm-ups. Until January they don't see the goal. And they have to attend two afternoons a week. They have to give up Little League and soccer. Thirty remained in the end. Over time they start to bond, camaraderie builds up. (principal)*

*It's good for them, it motivates them. They feel like they're talented. They're surprised about their talent. They get little feelings about it. My daughter does ballet so she likes it, it's her thing. But the show made her more responsible. It was hard for her. She thought it would be a regular play. She didn't know she'd have to put so much effort into it. You have to love it. She learned a lot. (parent)*

A parent of a seventh grader talked about his child's commitment to stick to the task of learning his lines. He had a lead role with many lines to learn.

I: What was the most challenging thing for him?

P: I think he felt learning the lines was challenging. That was something quite new to him, and something he'd never done. I would say it was the thing he was most nervous about.

I: His part had many lines?

P: ...We didn't really do [memorization] at school [when I was young], but my parents stood up there in front of their classroom reciting poetry and just memorizing things. Reciting is how they used to do things. It's something that doesn't happen really in schools anymore. Kids don't memorize and recite. So that was something he had never done before. I think probably in some ways it was the most surprising thing about it. I don't think it had really struck him before, that, "Oh God, I've got to memorize lines and remember them word for word." And he felt responsible for memorizing them and delivering them word for word. So that was probably the most challenging, besides the fact of getting up on stage in front of his peers.

I: How did he cope with learning the lines?

P: He practiced a lot. He didn't seem stressed about it. He never said, "Oh, I can't do this," or anything like that. He definitely took it seriously and practiced. And he practiced lines with his sister. I'd walk by his room and I'd hear him practicing.

A Musical Director spoke about how the children learned that they had to work hard to develop their performing skills.

*I think it was also really good for these kids, all of them, across the board, to really learn about what it means to bring something up to true performance level. You know, there's no second chances, once the curtain comes up, you have to know your lines cold, as opposed to sorta-kinda know them. That was a big piece for our music band. Knowing the difference between kinda-sorta knowing them, and really knowing them inside out, backwards and forwards. A big piece. Because a lot of the children have no opportunity to be called upon to rehearse something again and again and again until it's polished. They don't know what that means!*

Four girls worked consistently to master the quartet in *The Music Man*.

*Those four little girls worked very, very hard to be able to pull that off. And they now know what it means to have to rehearse. Every week they were in here with me, an extra rehearsal. Every Monday for the last six weeks before the show for an hour working on harmony, so that they could do it. And no question about it, they never said, "Oh, I have to do it again," or "Come on, I'm tired." No, they got it. They really got it. (Musical Director)*

A parent talked about her sixth-grade son, who was motivated to learn his lines and never complained.

P: I think when he originally did it, he expected to be back in the chorus somewhere, and not have a featured role...I encouraged him to do it because I liked the idea of a long-term elective. And, quite frankly, also because I felt that the public schools provided a somewhat limited amount of arts exposure and this was an opportunity for a good dose of arts...And I knew that they would also be going to see shows and talk about them. That was a lot of my motivation. I didn't see any other way he was going to get it in this year.

I: Was it difficult to learn all the lines, songs and choreography?

P: He didn't complain about it, but he worked at it. He did very diligently go and study his lines. He never asked me to read lines with him...He was nervous also about the dancing, because it was something he had never done. There was one part, he would come home every week and show it to me and practice it. He was obviously concerned about how he was going to perform it.

*I had five kids [in the production]. They said it was a lot of work, but they enjoyed it. They became more focused. They became closer with each other. They wanted to read and work together. They had to be so focused to be in the play. [Back in my classroom], in their reading, they were a little more focused. They took more pride in what they were doing. They made beautiful posters in*

*class for a project we were doing. They did lots of details which they wouldn't have done in the past. (teacher)*

On the other hand, some students didn't stick it out, and dropped out of the production. In one school, some students were forced by their Little League coaches to choose between baseball and musical theater.

*In the beginning, after a little while, some kids dropped out. They got itchy. They wanted to be given parts and start working on the show itself. Some of the kids who left early on complained that they were tired of doing the exercises. We began with seventy kids and lost a few every month or so. We ended up with twenty-three. But that was enough. It was too much work for some of them. I was very disappointed when about ten kids dropped out about a month before the show. They weren't the absolute best workers, but still. I think they had some stage fright, some anxiety [and, according to the principal, because of Little League]. But the really dedicated ones stayed. They learned a lot about discipline. They saw that if they stuck it out, stuck with it, it would be rewarding. (teacher)*

## Gaining Self-Confidence

Parents and teachers often told us about children gaining confidence through participation in the productions. For instance, they sometimes mentioned that their child was shy, but was able to gain confidence through learning to perform.

*And his sister, who did a whole bunch of small roles, she was right on the mark. She's a shy kid. And for her to show her colleagues, to see her on her mark, doing her thing, she was incredible. She's only 9 years old and she is so solid. [parent]*

Some children had trouble dealing with their fear of performing. But they overcame their fear, gaining confidence in their ability to perform.

*I mean, I don't know how these things sort of are. They're contagious. So, I don't know if he started it or he picked up on somebody else's thing. But you know, it turned into an almost crisis for him. He didn't go to one or two rehearsals....He said, "I'm not going to be in the show and that's it." And I said to him, "You can't do that. It's not responsible, the show's a week away, and all of your friends and everyone else is depending on you to do your part. You know, you can't just get up and walk away from this." So then, when I got home from work, he hadn't gone to rehearsal that day. [But then] he said, "Okay, that's it, I'm going to do it." [parent]*

A parent described her child's growth in confidence.

*I think she has a little less confidence in a few areas and I think that [Broadway Junior] helped her tremendously. And I think for all the kids, I think in just getting up in front of a class, making presentations, speaking up for yourself and just being more self aware and more confident in what you're going to say, I think it's a huge help doing it in a fun way. And I definitely think it spills over into your everyday life as you get older, too, even if you don't want to be an actress or a singer or a dancer. In the business world you need these skills. Or just in your everyday life. I really think it makes you a better all around person.*

Other parents talked about what their children gained from Broadway Junior.

*I think, every time he goes to a show for the rest of his life, he's going to remember it, quite frankly. And he'll feel good about it. And I think he'll always have this kind of good feeling about himself.*

*Well, the behavior that I'm talking about is not bad behavior versus good behavior, but shy behavior versus pride, you know, full of self-worth. A personal sense of satisfaction. Okay, I can give you a very specific example. My own daughter, who really has, in some ways, some really great onstage qualities. And on the other hand, she can get very fearful. She's not a risk-taker, as a person. And the first couple of performances, she did very well, then she kind of freaked herself out. And with two subsequent school performances, the weekend, Saturday and Sunday, she absolutely came alive. And Saturday night I saw she really came alive. Really alive, and I said, "What happened? That was fabulous!" And she said, "I tried to be the star when it was my turn." I was so happy. I said, "You know, if you use that philosophy in your whole life... Whether or not you're on the stage, but just on the street...in the boardroom. You will be a very successful person." You know? So that's a pretty heavy thing to learn.*

Other perspectives on improved self-confidence:

*I think they developed a certain, almost secret, pride about themselves. That they did this. This girl, before, during the rehearsals, if I saw her in the hallway, she wouldn't look at me. And then after the performance, now she's so happy to see me. She is really proud of herself. She's just different. The sense of accomplishment is amazing. (choreographer)*

*It gives the kids confidence that they didn't have before. They get stage presence and a better self image. They realize they have talents they never knew they possessed. The program nurtures and develops them. They get to show off to their parents. (principal)*

A teacher talked about one girl who struggled to overcome her shyness and perform confidently on stage.

*She literally hid behind people, I mean, [at first the Director] would say “Stand there” and she’d go hide behind a taller person! And [she would] dance with her fingers. I mean, it was so sad! Well she didn’t go front and center, but she put herself on her mark and did her thing, so it was still a group thing, but the fact that she wasn’t hiding behind someone else was fabulous. [At first] she never wanted a line, and then she was saying her lines, nice and big and clear.*

A parent described her son, who was in sixth grade at the time he played a lead role last year in *Music Man*. She described him as shy, but nonetheless he found that he enjoyed performing.

- I: What do you think that your son got out of it?  
P: He got a lot out of it. One is that he had a ton of fun. He came home from rehearsal every week and said, “Gee, we had a great time at rehearsal today.” Of course, when you want your kids in school you want them to really have fun at school. It was a different learning process for him. He thoroughly enjoyed it. Well, I think that being on stage in front of your peers is a terribly difficult thing to do, than in some ways in front of strangers at that age. Particularly in front of your peers. By the way, he is a shy kid. He is absolutely a shy kid.  
I: Yet he got one of the lead roles.  
P: That was very unexpected to him. My recollection is that they discussed the roles at the beginning and then he kind of came home and thought about who he would try out for.

A Musical Director told us about one child who has difficulty with school work and how working with the Broadway staff had helped his confidence.

*The problems that he has really did impact on the rehearsal. I mean, it wasn’t scot-free, it’s not like he comes here, and he suddenly is no problem. [But the reasons for his success are] twofold. One, he knows deep down this is an area of strength for him. He is aware of that. The other thing is that he feels very safe, especially with me and [the choreographer]. He just knows how much we believe in him. And I know that, and that is not something that he normally allows himself to feel so readily.*

Another parent spoke about gains in a child’s confidence through the challenge of mastering a difficult role.

*The fact the director had made a commitment to his having the lead, endorsing and affirming his ability. That he could say, “Wow, people have confidence in me. I can have confidence in myself to do this.” Also, his confidence was built in that when he looked at how many lines it was, and he said, “Oh, it’s 140 lines, 3-plus songs. I don’t know.” But as they walked through it the first few weeks, he*

*realized he was going to be able to digest it and do the memorization and do the blocking and do the performing he needed to do.*

A teacher told us about two fourth graders who almost left the show.

*Two kids wanted to drop out at one point and we spoke to them and convinced them to stay. They complained they were tired of standing all the time. Their legs were hurting them. During the show they were among the most energetic. They were really out there. Their teacher said that [one of the girls] used to be very shy, and now she has more confidence .*

Another parent talked of how her son took his role seriously, as he developed confidence in his abilities.

*I think that he just most of all developed a sense of himself, of challenging himself. And I did feel throughout the process, especially at the end, that he was challenging himself to do it at a certain level that he would feel good about himself. And he would come home and he'd say, they did four performances but he felt differently about how he did each one...He'd say, "You know this performance my dancing wasn't as good," or he delivered this line a little bit late, somewhat self-critiquing, or "Gee, this was a really good show," Being able to assess himself and also assess the other performers. How they had done and how the group had done as a whole. Had they fooled around? Had they pulled it together? Had they taken it seriously? Because he's someone who felt like once he was going to do it, he was gonna do it. He wasn't going to go up there and make a fool out of himself.*

A parent explained that being a part of the production enhanced her child's feeling of success:

*The sense of self-worth and self-esteem was increased. I really think it's been really important for him. Because school's a very painful experience for him, and this is one big way in which it is not. I'm sure it has [carried over into other areas]. I mean, I can't quantify that, but I am convinced that it has.*

### **Positive Risk-Taking**

Another parent talked about his third grader gaining confidence and learning to take risks:

*His self-esteem, I think, was definitely impacted favorably. And you know, at first he was worried, in last year's play, about the kiss and the slap... And you know, it turned out that he got to learn that there is a little respect for getting up on stage and doing something like that, and that you're not going to be teased for taking chances like that. And so that helped his attitude, his confidence as a kid, not just as an actor.*

A parent described how her son worked with the Director to develop his performance, taking a personal risk and gaining confidence.

*But, you know, he had a problem this year with Music Man, when he wanted to sing “Shipooopi” down an octave. And Mary Ann [Director] just wanted him to be comfortable in the part. But when he went down, and he tried to sing, you know, (sings in a very deep voice) “Well, a woman who’ll kiss on the very first date” – he couldn’t, you know, there was no tenor or baritone available to sing. He had nothing downstairs, so there was no energy, so the song couldn’t sell – and he was dancing a pretty vigorous dance. So he had no air to push, even if he was trying to go on the bottom on his register. So they kept saying, “You sound fine when you sing up high.” And some girl – a chorus member from last year – had teased him about how high he could sing, because one of the ballads he sang very high. And it lingered in his mind like a little virus. When it came time to sing this, he was not comfortably sing the octave up. And both Mary Ann and Amy [Music Director], to their great credit and to saving that song, walked him through that – he’s the comedy guy, he’s the party guy – and they walked him through the character, so that he could find that he could still be the funny guy and the nutty guy and sing it up the octave and have the confidence that he was doing the right thing as a singer and actor.*

### **Performing**

Clearly, the children’s growth in self-confidence was due to their perception that they had acquired new and difficult skills in dance, drama and singing, and had been able to use these skills to perform in front of their families, teachers and friends.

*You know, I was just floored by it...Kind of parental pride, but also there was a lot of marvel in just that he could do it, and that he could enjoy doing it, and that it was really a pleasant and fulfilling experience. (parent)*

*Well, there was just a lot hard work. They improved a lot. Oh, I know, we all saw their joy when they got their first round of applause from the very first show in front of their parents. They ran back stage when the curtain closed and they were yelling at the top of their lungs “We’re superstars! We’re superstars!!!” You could see the sheer joy and excitement. It brought tears to all of our eyes. I know the kids here. A lot of them have hard lives. To get that response, to see a new side of them that they hadn’t seen, in the neighborhood in the school – that was it. (teacher)*

### **Connections to Others: A Sense of Community**

The productions helped children develop new kinds of relationships with peers and teachers. They were able to become friendly with other students from different grades.

As the rehearsals progressed, they became more aware that they were depending on each other to make the production a success, thereby developing a stronger sense of community.

In an interview, a parent talked about what a positive experience it was for her child to work with and get to know kids from the other grades.

*That is a big thing because it's all grades, three grades, anybody can participate. In sixth grade she was able to make a lot of good friends with the seventh and eighth graders. It was so nice for her to meet a lot of other kids. And I liked particularly getting to know the older kids, too. That was terrific. The boys and the girls, they were all just so nice to each other. In the production, on the sidelines, the whole community was really great.*

Another parent described a similar outcome for her sixth grader, telling us how important it was for him to be part of the group working on the production.

I: You said he really enjoyed the sense of community. How did you know that? Did he talk about it?

P: Well, because he came home every day and he would say he had so much fun, and during the break I sat with so and so, and we got this done, and we were laughing about this. And he would say, "Gee, now I know a lot of kids in different grades because they're in the show with me." Certainly as a sixth grader he felt connected to the whole school, being part of something that he might not have [otherwise]. Because he didn't just know kids in the sixth grade anymore, he knew kids in seventh and eighth grade really well, and spent a lot of time with them. So, that's when I say a feeling of community, a kind of feeling apart of something that was kind of significant to the entire school.

A parent spoke convincingly about how important it was for her child to be part of the production community.

*I'm convinced that this was a really critical experience for K\_\_\_\_\_, given his basic overall failure in being able to keep up with his schoolwork. And I think that it has been a critical part of keeping him feeling okay about school. He looked forward to the play – from last year to this year – and I think it gave him a great sense of accomplishment. It gave him a peer group. You see, I mean, he's in his class, and they are his peer group in some ways, but in other ways they're not at all...It really gave him a sense of being able to do what everybody else is doing. And feeling like he's a full participant, and competent.*

*They were very supportive of each other. They were never putting each other down. They built strong relationships. (teacher)*

## The School Community

We asked a teacher if the Broadway Junior project affected the whole school community.

*ArtsConnection has been great. The school had stopped doing performances before this. Anyway, the shows the school had put on themselves had been really garbage-y. So the kids weren't getting these skills anywhere else. A lot of kids feel better and happier when they see these other skills and are not judged entirely on their school skills. There are other sides to them. When I see the kids who were in the show in the hallways now, they always look happy and confident. They are smiling. You can tell they feel good about themselves.*

The principal described the school community's reaction to the performances.

*It adds a nice spirit, good feelings. Every grade sees it and they learn that they can eventually attain that. The performances add a lot. It shocks the community to see the performances – the professionalism of the scenery, the staging. They perform not as fourth or fifth graders but as much older children.*

*I'm just so happy that it's in the school. Of course she can always do this on the outside but it's just so nice for it to be in the school they're going to. And to be with a group of kids that they already know and to get to know other kids that they may not have, and I think that makes a big impression on you, even more so than doing it with outside groups. I think it's wonderful to have it in the school community, so I hope they're able to continue it. (parent)*

## Interest in Theater

A parent described how Broadway Junior had provided her child with the wonderful opportunity to perform and show her interests to the school community.

*[Theater] is one of the things in her life that she just truly loves. She's the type of kid, I have to say, over the years most people's first impression of her is that she's be more of a shy child, not shy, but not the life of the party, you know, more reserved. And in my mind, because I know her at home, and from doing these things, I say she's really quite the opposite. When she's performing she has no fear, she loves being out there. She's on the small side. She's petite and she sings these numbers that are loud as can be. It's such a funny difference, what people's perceptions of her who don't know her that well. She really has a whole different side to her that comes out on stage and it's great to see.*

A teacher told us that his students developed a greater interest in theater through working on the production.

*Most of the kids had been touched by theater in some way in the past, some previous experience in an earlier grade, but very minimally. They developed 100%! After the process of a whole year, there was tremendous improvement. The experience of the whole legitimate, professional theater experience changed them. It opened a door for them. When they get older and the opportunity is there they will choose to do theater again....For instance, S\_\_\_\_\_ said she is going to a dramatic arts middle school. Out of 23, I assume 10 to a half will go on with drama.*

A parent talked about how doing the production increased her child's desire to be a performer.

*I guess it reinforced her good opinion of this kind of life in general. In the back of my mind, you know, it can be a heartbreaking life, if that's what you choose to have as your career. She just enjoys it so much I think it totally reinforced her idea of the type of people involved with it, and the joy of performing, and the communication with the audience, you know, knowing how to get people how to respond to you. And it also reinforced her idea that she really wants to go to LaGuardia [High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts].*

A parent explained that her seventh grader developed a better understanding of drama as a result of the Broadway experience.

*Partly it was the confidence of getting up on stage, and partly it was the new confidence of tackling a challenge. He likes being a part of the community. He developed a whole new appreciation for looking at the theater. We went to a children's production shortly thereafter he had done "The Music Man." It was a production of Gilbert and Sullivan and he said, "I didn't like it 'cause they really didn't have good character development." You know, Gilbert and Sullivan characters are pretty flat. I mean, he noticed that. He said, "Well, they're just kind of like caricatures and they were just played very flat." So I think he really developed an eye for what to look for as a member of the audience. At the same time, he looks at the actors and the actresses and the whole production in a different way. The first thing they're doing at school is they're reading a play this year, and he's very interested in it in a way that I do not think he would have been before...I'd say he definitely values theater and feels a linkage to it in a way that he didn't before.*

A parent of a seventh grader told us that her son would be taking a break from Broadway Junior next year, but would continue in the future. However, she felt that his interest of in theatrical experiences was altered as a result of his participation in the production. She explained that he hadn't liked going to the theater in the past.

*He is actually not going to take Broadway Junior this year. He opted for football (he's very passionate about this and he put the play as his second choice). Although, he said, "I did it last year and I'll do it next year." When other people*

*do it, when he goes to the theater, when he reads plays or he thinks about the theater experience, he thinks about it very differently [now].*

### **Theater and Music Skills**

A parent described the theatrical skills that his child learned.

*I think he knows how to ratchet it up for a show. And I think that was a key component of this that he knows how to click from being the nine-year-old kid to whatever role he is. And I'm sure some of that is embedded in being able to draw out of a good script, and direction along with the script. He found something that he likes. If I said to him, "Mary Ann's doing a play, would you be interested?" he would say yes before asking what the play was. And a lot of it has to do with the experience of these two plays that he did, that were both Broadway Junior plays.*

*He got to find out how he could lean on his voice and actually shine. He learned to play with his voice. (parent)*

A parent expressed surprise at how good the production was and how much her son had learned about drama.

*It was better than I expected. I thought the show was wonderful. I was surprised because he kept talking about how he really was very concerned that he be in character. It was obvious that they had had a lot of conversation about this during the rehearsal process because he was [often saying] I've got to be my character, and who the character would be. And I felt like he was not the only one who got this message, the entire cast did. That part of it really struck me.*

Another parent comment:

*It was more than clear to me as a parent, that there was training and experience here that was beyond anything purchasable. I could spend thousands and thousands of dollars and not be able to buy that anywhere.*

*So they're really, really talented kids. I know these children, and we have a lot of children in there with issues, learning issues and behavioral issues, that one would think would impede the learning of some very specific skills. That turned out to be completely untrue. [Musical Director]*

We asked a principal what he had heard from parents about the performances. The principal emphasized how parents were impressed with how the children pulled together to put on the production.

*After the show parents said they couldn't believe how well it was staged. They are used to regular performances that are cute, nice, but without the polish*

*professional artists can bring. Since October, [the children] have been working with a choreographer, musical director and technical director. They've been using real mikes. There are totally different characteristics in such a performance. The parents were truly awed by it. They commented that they couldn't believe it.*

A teacher in one school explained that she had showed a video of the musical to her entire class. The children in her class that were in the production demonstrated their knowledge by explaining the context of the video to the rest of the class.

*I think they're a lot more sophisticated about it. I mean, my experience was, I showed the movie to all the classes, not just the kids in the show. So that the kids who were watching would understand what they're watching, and instead of being filled with: "What happened?" "What's he saying?" "What did they do?" They would know. But the kids that were in the show, when we were watching the video, would ask me to stop, and they would explain to the [non-participating] kids.*

## Responses to Parent Surveys

We surveyed parents to gain additional insight into how children grew during the rehearsals and productions. Representative responses are provided in this section.

|   |
|---|
| <b>Why did your child participate in the Broadway Junior program?</b> |
|---|

Parents reported that their children participated because of their interest in the arts and their positive experiences with prior Broadway Junior productions.

### Sample responses:

- *She has loved to sing, dance and act since she was in kindergarten.*
- *He found the program very interesting.*
- *His sister had fun with it previous years, and he had enjoyed Pied Piper production.*
- *She had been in Annie and Guys and Dolls in previous years.*
- *I saw it as a great after school opportunity.*
- *She loves the theater and musicals and she enjoys acting.*
- *She has a penchant for everything artistic.*
- *My child is interested in the acting/singing field.*

**Did he or she participate in musicals, acting, dancing or singing before Broadway Junior?**

Most parents who responded to the surveys reported that their children had some prior experience in related arts activities.

- *No, she sang in the school chorus only. Her first year in Broadway Junior was in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.*
- *Yes, dancing and singing.*
- *Yes, the school has a strong drama program. Kids write and present their own one-act plays.*
- *Yes, community theater productions – 2 shows.*
- *Has been in school “mini” plays and shows. Also plays violin in school.*
- *Yes, other plays put together by the drama teacher at the school and other Broadway Junior productions.*
- *She has been taking tap dancing classes. She participated in Christmas shows at her Catholic school since kindergarten.*
- *Yes, school plays.*

**Did your child gain new skills or abilities in Broadway Junior?**

Parents reported gains in arts skills, self-confidence and performing ability, and new relations with peers.

- *She learned how to dance better and perform with a huge crowd watching. She learned to take instructions.*
- *Learned new dancing steps and songs he enjoyed.*
- *Yes. More confidence in being in front of a crowd, and more control in his singing—he had two solo songs, so it was not like just being in the chorus.*
- *Her singing voice and confidence keep improving. Also, she was able to improvise in a scene to cover a missed prop cue—This was amazing to watch!*
- *As a member of the “Barbershop Quartet” she learned to sing a capella harmony.*
- *She started the show with stage fright and by the end was asking for more lines.*
- *She increased her confidence to perform and of course learned to work with a group of fellow students. She also learned to memorize her parts and speak her lines slowly and enunciate. And, of course, she had fun.*
- *Yes, she had to learn her lines. Synchronize with the rest of the cast. Work in with the chorus. [She learned] the importance of rehearsal and more rehearsal.*
- *My child gained self-confidence and was not afraid to conquer a role of a different gender.*

**Did you notice any other positive changes in your child because of the Broadway Junior experience?**

Again, parents reported improvement in self-confidence, performing ability and peer relations. They also reported an increased interest in theater.

- *She learned how to be more outgoing and make more friends.*
- *He was really proud of his scenes, especially one which had a lot of exits and re-entries from different sides of the stage.*
- *She continues to strengthen her ability to create and “inhabit” a character. And her sense of pitch kept improving. And she really developed her brogue (her character was Irish.)*
- *She met and worked with kids from the other programs and other aged children. Great concentration and development of stage presence.*
- *She felt special (which she is) and invited friends to come and watch!*
- *I think any creative endeavor brings out the best in children and when they see themselves get better at something it impacts positively on other school activities.*
- *She came out more enthusiastic about continuing in acting and dancing classes.*
- *Higher self-esteem and confidence in herself.*

**What surprised you the most about the production?**

Parents were impressed with the dedication of the children and the quality of the performances.

- *My husband and I thought the production was so excellent.*
- *How much I enjoyed seeing a play. Everything.*
- *How good the kids were, though, this was less of a surprise with Music Man. We had been treated to surprisingly good productions of Annie and Guys and Dolls in previous years.*
- *I was blown away by her comfort on stage.*
- *How good it was.*
- *Nothing! I had seen last year’s performance and was extremely impressed with the level of professionalism.*
- *They’re always very enjoyable and of course some kids are better than others, but as an ensemble the kids really know what they are doing.*
- *The professionalism with which the kids took their participation. The potential that was revealed in most of the kids to act and express themselves.*
- *The children were very dedicated to the performance. They memorized complex lines and songs.*

**What was the most challenging about the Broadway Junior production for your child? How did he or she cope with these challenges?**

Parents reported that children were positively challenged by the musical, dance and dramatic demands of the production.

- *She had to learn a lot of songs and how to dance to all the songs.*
- *He just kept working hard and practicing his lines. His focus and motivation were great!*
- *Singing harmony. [She coped with it through] extra practice with the musical director.*
- *She originally wanted only backstage work. Then as time went on she loved the play and wanted to be part of it.*
- *She really enjoyed the entire process and didn't find any of it challenging.*
- *What I believe was most challenging about Broadway Junior was getting the young children to memorize their lines.*

## Broadway Junior and the ArtsConnection Staff

Principals, parents and teachers were overwhelmingly appreciative of the work of the Broadway Junior-ArtsConnection staff. For instance, a parent described how the production team helped create a positive experience for her child.

*I think that he felt that they were taking it seriously and wanted a good performance out of him. That they were talking to him. I was around rehearsals because I was helping supervise kids in the back room, with costumes. And I could see the level that were treating the kids. He felt like he was treated with respect, that he was doing something seriously and they were respectful about the way they treated him. He's a kid who's always been in large classrooms, in a public school situation. He's in a school with a lot of kids, not that many teachers for the number of kids. Anytime an adult pays attention to you, you kind of suck that up in a way, because you're not just part of the [big] group. That was part of the good experience for him. Someone was paying attention to the way he specifically was doing something. Even if it was the way he said a line that day, or when his entrance was. I think again, in a large class public school setting, when you have some individual attention for something good and something serious, even if it's because you are doing something slightly wrong and someone's trying to correct it, to make it better, it's good attention.*

A parent praised the relationships that her child developed with the adults involved in the production.

*She just always talks so much about the people, the grown-ups that were involved in the production. She just thought they were lovely. I mean she couldn't say enough about how nice they were...I think it's a discipline too, it's not just a free for all. They really have to learn to work as a team. And there would be certain times when she'd come home and say, "So-and-so wasn't cooperating," and how they had to handle it and that would annoy her because she's a very well-behaved child and she likes things to go smoothly and participates in a positive way. And I do think Mary Ann [Director] just really handled it really well...I think that made a big impression on her. And that makes an impression on your life, how you see grownups handle situations.*

The parent continued:

*I can't say enough about the grownup role models. I think that's been just great for her....You know, some kids really get connected to their teachers and it's just love, love, love, adore them. She has not always been like that. So I know when she picks out certain people to talk about I know it really means a lot to her. And this group, she has only had great things to say about them. So, I really think that was a big, big deal.*

We asked a parent whether it was difficult for her son to learn his lines and songs. She spoke of how the Director helped him prepare.

*I'd say it was somewhere between difficult and whatever would be a little less than difficult. He was enthusiastic, so he was motivated to learn. He wanted to. And I think that Mary Ann made it easy. She pointed out a pace that would work. She got them to bite off small chunks, and that made a big difference. She knew how to pace them. And at times she would say, you need to know this song, you need to have this song memorized now, you need to be able to do this scene without the script. So they would walk with the script for the first couple of weeks of rehearsal. The kids would all be walking around with binders. She encouraged the kids to scribble on the script, highlight your line.*

And finally, some additional perspectives on the program and the staff that helped put together the performances:

*It was great to work with a group of adults who know what they are doing, who were so professional. I was very impressed with Broadway Junior. The instructors were excellent. They were really good with the kids. They spoke nicely to them, were pleasant and mature. They were very insightful. I mean they really knew their stuff. (teacher)*

*The quality of what Mary Ann got out of the kids and the degree of fun that the kids had, and satisfaction they got out of doing their best, definitely met or succeeded my expectations. (parent)*

*It's an excellent program. It's enjoyable and brings a good spirit to the school. (principal)*