

Creative Career Pathways

Beyond STEM: Emphasizing the Arts in Career Pathways

Acknowledgements

The authors of the report would like to thank Abby Jo Sigal and Lazar Treschan at HERE to HERE; Tim Lord and Jason Duchin at DreamYard; and Eddie Summers, Max Griffith, and Julian Joyner at The Thinkubator for their invaluable contributions in shaping this project. We would also like to thank Keisha Katz at Reel Works, Katie Beck Sutler at the Brooklyn STEAM Center, Dorothy Dunn with the Sara Little Turnbull Foundation, and Dave Schwittek at Lehman College for reviewing a draft and providing feedback. Thanks to Joselina Fay for designing the publication and Emily Roese at HERE to HERE for managing the design process. Thanks to Leandra Manon for her great work in profiling two of the many community-based organizations in the Bronx providing opportunities for young people in creative fields and to Jerelyn Rodriguez and **The Knowledge House**; Danny Peralata and **The Point**; and Rosalba Rolon at **Pregones/PRTT** for their participation and support of this project. Thank you to Susan Ebersole and Dante Albertie for speaking to the authors about the exciting work happening in creative fields at Lehman College. Lastly, but most importantly, thanks to the young people who spoke with us about their experiences pursuing creative interests and careers.

About this Report

This report is the product of a partnership between HERE to HERE, CareerWise New York, Pathways to Creative Industries, The Thinkubator, and DreamYard, and was authored by Apurva Mehrotra, Vice President, Research & Analytics at HERE to HERE and Joiselle Cunningham, Vice President of Training and Strategy at CareerWise New York and CEO at Pathways to Creative Industries. The purpose of this report is to highlight the viability of creative career pathways for young people in New York City. We use research, data analysis and the voice of students to make the case that career pathway opportunities must not be confined to the fields in which this work has traditionally taken place, e.g. mid-skill vocational fields or the more recent focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics [STEM]. The organizations involved in this report are committed to social, economic, and racial justice and believe that research and data analysis and the voices of students can inform programs and policies that help young people reach their full potential and create a more inclusive, resilient economy

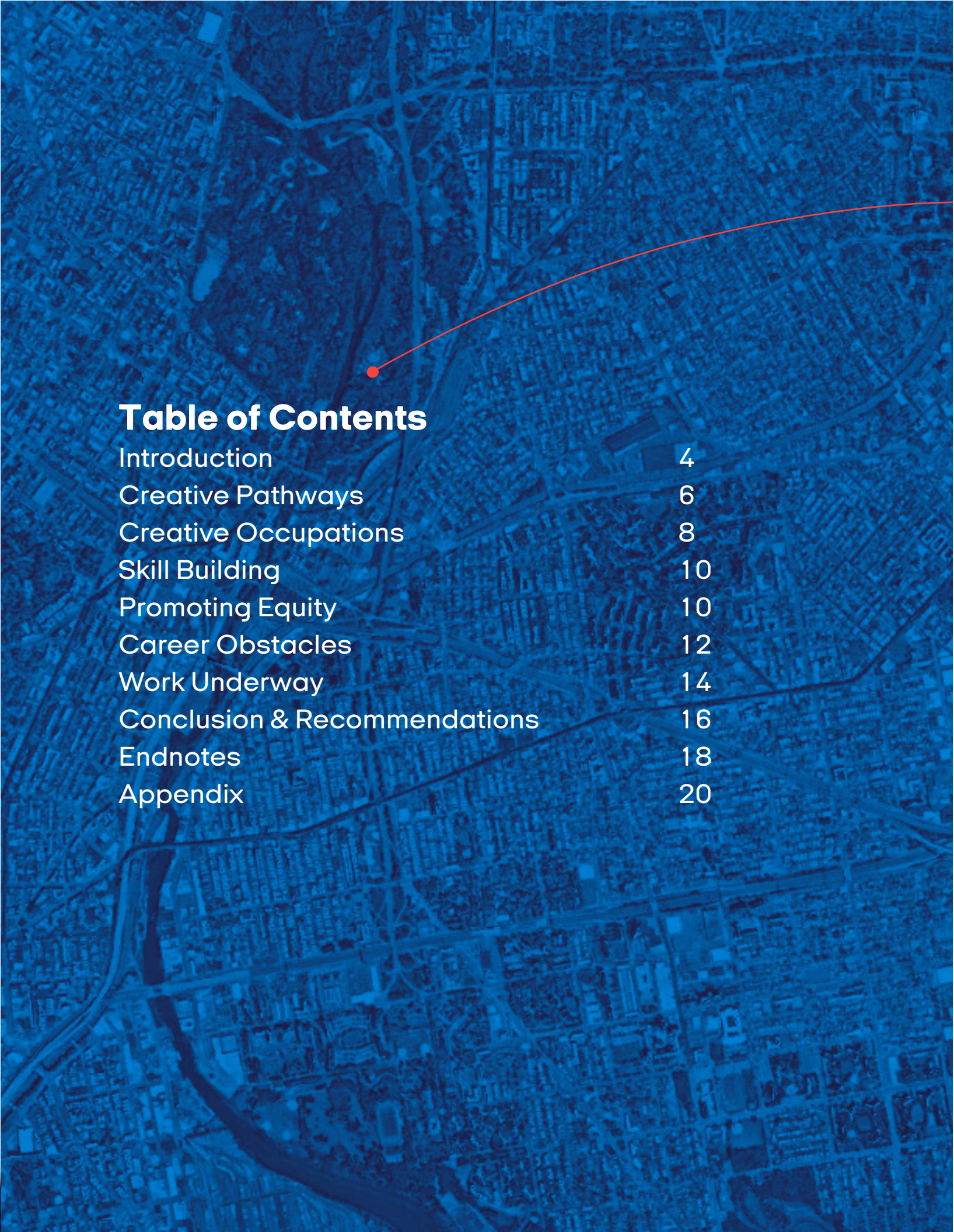


Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Creative Pathways	6
Creative Occupations	8
Skill Building	10
Promoting Equity	10
Career Obstacles	12
Work Underway	14
Conclusion & Recommendations	16
Endnotes	18
Appendix	20



Introduction

Changes to the global and local economies—and an increasing focus on the issues of racial equity and income inequality—have compelled stakeholders across the country to put substantial resources into career pathways programming. The traditional pathway of going from high school to college and into a fulfilling career is no longer guaranteed and has never been a promise delivered to the vast majority of people of color in marginalized communities.¹

Career pathways programs are designed to support individuals in acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to obtain employment in high-growth fields that pay family-sustaining wages. In high schools, work-based learning and other pathways programming allow young people to discover their interests and aptitudes and marry them with skill development that can put them on a career track. In addition to skill development, such programs help young people expand their professional networks and make more informed decisions about their future.

Critical to career pathways work is identifying occupations and industries where the demand for talent is projected to grow and employment leads to a meaningful career. There are several occupations and industries for which New York City is uniquely suited to offer young people programming that can inform their educational and career trajectory. For many, the financial services industry may be the first that comes to mind. The focus of this document, however, is on career pathways in creative occupations and industries.

Creative fields can be defined as the range of occupations and industries “which have their origin in individual creativity, skill, and talent, and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.”² As we discuss throughout this report, creative fields provide a broad range of opportunities for young people to build on their interests and acquire skills that transfer across industries, and New York City—where the arts and creative culture are a significant part of the economy and overall fabric of the city—is an ideal environment for creative career pathways work to take place.

Creative career pathways could be especially meaningful for students from the Bronx, which has the lowest employment rate—among both adults and youth—in the city. The Bronx is widely regarded as a creative hub, where a wide range of cultures have made their imprint on the city through a variety of art forms and mix in very dynamic ways.³ Aligning meaningful career pathways to the creative interests that many young people in the Bronx possess can serve as an important gateway for all young people, and could particularly resonate with those who may otherwise face challenges in the transition from high school to postsecondary spaces and/or careers. Given the role that arts and culture play in creating social cohesion, promoting equity, and strengthening the economy, particularly in under-resourced communities,⁴ it is all the more important to ensure that young people in the Bronx—and across New York City—know about and have access to creative career pathways.

Through our analysis of labor market data, we found that:

- **Creative industries comprise a substantially greater share of jobs in New York City compared to the rest of the country.**
- **Within some creative industry groups, particularly entertainment and digital media, employment and average salaries are higher—and growing faster—than overall employment and wages.**
- **Creative occupations do not just exist in creative industries; just over half of all creative occupations occur in so-called ‘non-creative’ industries.**
- **The demographic makeup of workers in creative industries in New York City is not reflective of the workforce as a whole, with black and Hispanic workers underrepresented in creative fields.**

Through additional research and conversations with young people, we found that:

- **There are substantial benefits for young people involved in creative or arts programming, including the acquisition of social-emotional and other transferable skills that employers value.**
- **Young people face a variety of obstacles in pursuing their creative interests and translating their interests into a career pathway, including a lack of information and understanding on the part of educators, parents and/or guardians.**
- **Creative and arts-focused programming can provide a gateway to a variety of opportunities, including those within and outside creative fields.**

Recommendations

We recommend the following steps to better connect young people with creative interests to opportunities to inform a creative career path:

- **Increase messaging to students, teachers, and caregivers on the viability of creative careers**
- **Provide opportunities for advising and mentorship from professionals of color in creative fields**
- **Devote greater resources to support low-income young people in arts programming**
- **Explore a CDOS creative career pathway in New York City Department of Education high schools**
- **Create more creative pathway linkages at CUNY**
- **Focus creative industry and pathway investment in the Bronx**



Creative Pathways

Creative pathways are as viable as STEM, especially in New York City

Career pathways work for the last several years has emphasized the importance of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics [STEM] fields. There are some valid reasons for this. STEM fields offer a wide range of mid to high-paying jobs and relatively stable employment. And because there has historically been an underrepresentation of Black and Latinx workers,⁵ the desire to provide young people of color with access to jobs in STEM fields is commendable. However, the organizations behind this report are concerned about the possibility that Black and Latinx youth from traditionally underserved communities are being limited to certain fields in ways that other subgroups are not.

When looking at environments that are rich in resources and opportunity, we would readily say that STEM is not for everyone and that students should have the opportunity to explore their interests and make individual determinations about their career path. It should be no different for Black and Latinx students from under-resourced communities. These students should have the same level of agency as their peers and, as such, should not be steered toward a STEM pathway simply because those fields are regarded as providing a certain level of opportunity. Furthermore, STEM careers may not offer the long-term benefits and stability that we once thought. Recent research shows that wage gains for STEM workers decline over time and that STEM skills are at high risk of growing obsolete due to rapidly changing technologies.⁶ The same research points to the importance of flexibility, adaptability, and social skills, all of which can be developed in both STEM and arts-based programming. As we discuss later in this report, there is also overlap between creative and STEM pathways that should be explored.

Data makes clear that in New York City, creative industries are a promising area for career pathways work to take place.⁷ Of the nearly 4.4 million jobs in New York City, just over 10% are in a creative industry, with the vast majority in entertainment and digital media sectors. The share of jobs in New York City that are in creative industries is second only to Los Angeles and is more than double that of the rest of the country. See the [Appendix](#) for detailed employment and wage data.

Not only do creative industries comprise a greater share of New York City's economy than in most places, but creative industry employment has also been growing. From 2008 to 2018, employment in creative industries in New York City grew at nearly three times the rate as the rest of the country and nearly matched overall New York City job growth. The fine and performing arts and entertainment and digital media industry groups each experienced an over 30% increase in employment from 2008 to 2018. Additionally, average salaries in creative industries are higher than in New York City overall, largely due to the \$148,000 average salary in the entertainment and digital media industry group, \$54,000 higher than in New York City overall. While the early job losses in the arts, entertainment and recreation industries in New York City due to COVID-19 have been substantial (as we detail later in the report) it is too early to determine whether the trends we were seeing prior to the pandemic will return once the economy has recovered.

This data demonstrates the viability of creative industries as a source for career pathways work in New York City. There is a clear opportunity to capitalize on the city's deep cultural and creative roots, and offer experiences to young people that will help them merge their creative interests with a meaningful, well-paying career.

Jayden

Student Stories

Jayden is a senior at Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School whose interest in creative fields spans from poetry to music to fashion. After developing an interest in fashion during his freshman year, his principal recommended the B.O.S.S. program, which teaches young people in the Bronx about entrepreneurship. While in the program, Jayden created a clothing line from the bottom up, learning everything from sewing to designing to marketing along the way.

In 2019, Jayden began an apprenticeship at Accenture through CareerWise New York and joined AvancebyPCI to learn about the fashion industry; he spoke of his clothing line and poetry in his interview for the position. Even though the apprenticeship has meant less time for music and fashion, his creativity is showing up in his new role. At Accenture, he has quickly gone from packaging mail to working on the social media and marketing team, including handling the company's Instagram account.

Jayden's interest in music and fashion hasn't subsided. He is currently looking at colleges, including music and fashion programs. The success he is enjoying at his apprenticeship may inform a different decision. Either way, he continues to push himself to perfect his creative crafts, and those efforts are likely to translate to whichever field he chooses.

Jayden notes that many of his peers are not able to engage in the same kinds of opportunities because available opportunities are not directly related to their interests. Jayden also mentions that while his parents have been supportive of his creative pursuits, oftentimes, parents will push their children into what they consider to be more stable careers.

Jayden's promising path underscores the importance of supportive adults – teachers, principals, program staff – who understand a young person's interest and the availability and awareness of opportunities to explore those interests. Additionally, awareness among students, parents, and other stakeholders about the promise of creative pathways should be raised. From creating a clothing line to the marketing team of a Fortune 500 company is a path most parents would likely approve of, if they knew it existed.

Creative Occupations

Creative occupations exist everywhere

Creative work does not just take place in creative industries; rather, creative occupations can be found in a wide variety of industries. Examples include a graphic designer working in a financial services firm or a 3D modeler specializing in biomedical image making. In fact, over half of New York City workers in creative occupations are not in creative industries. As the table below shows, the top industries for those who work in creative occupations include high-paying non-creative industries such as professional, scientific, and technical services, real estate, and management.

Top Industries Among NYC Workers in Creative Occupations

Creative Goals		Fashion		Entertainment & Digital Media		Architecture & Related		Fine & Performing Arts	
Misc. Manufacturing	10.8%	Cut & Sew Apparel	43.0%	Comp. Systems Design & Related Services	13.9%	Arch., Engineering & Related Services	80.5%	Performing Arts, Spectator Sports & Related Services	23.1%
Printing & Related Activities	7.0%	Dry Cleaning & Laundry Service	20.2%	Periodical Book & Directory Publishers	12.1%	Construction	4.3%	Specialized Design Services	18.1%
Construction	6.7%	Clothing Stores	7.1%	Performing Arts, Spectator Sports & Related Services	8.8%	Specialized Design Services	1.2%	Motion Picture & Video Industries	11.5%
Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Good Stores	3.0%	Personal/ Household Goods Repair & Maintenance	6.0%	Other Professional, Scientific & Tech Services	7.8%	Real Estate	1.2%	Advertising, Public Relations & Related	6.1%
Furniture & Related Products	2.9%	Traveler Accommodation	2.3%	Motion Picture & Video Industries	7.8%	Mgmt, Scientific & Tech. Consulting	1.0%	Broadcasting, Except Internet	4.3%

Source: Author's analysis of 2013-2017 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates



Whether they are occurring in creative or non-creative industries, creative occupations represent a substantial and growing part of New York City's economy. Of the top 40 occupations in New York City that have a median annual income of at least \$50,000, three are creative occupations. The table below shows the top 10 creative occupations in New York City and highlights the diversity of creative roles. These occupations can be found in a broad range of industries, from education to professional services to arts and entertainment.

Top 10 Creative Occupations by Employment Level
(only those occupations with a median annual income of \$50,000 or higher)

Occupation	Employment Level	Median Income	Projected Growth
Producers & Directors	22,500	\$103,200	11.5%
Editors	15,200	\$75,420	-9.7%
Graphic Designers	14,310	\$67,320	8.8%
Architects, Except Landscape & Naval	8,670	\$94,110	9.5%
Web Developer	8,550	\$77,630	17.5%
Art Directors	7,430	\$113,780	10.0%
Fashion Designers	6,940	\$80,390	2.5%
Writers & Authors	6,340	\$76,420	10.8%
Advertising & Promotions Managers	6,040	\$163,810	17.0%
Audio & Video Equipment Technicians	5,780	\$54,930	12.5%
Art, Drama & Music Teachers Post-Secondary	5,390	\$102,540	27.0%

Source: New York State Department of Labor Occupational Wages and Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections; projected growth from 2016-2026

As the table above shows, not only are there several creative occupations with high employment levels in New York City, but many of these occupations are projected to grow. All but one of the top ten creative occupations has positive projected growth, including several that approach or exceed citywide projected occupational growth of 13.7%.

Additionally, the skills that one accrues in or preparing for a creative occupation can provide the foundation for careers in non-creative occupations or industries. For example, a graphic designer or web developer will likely also possess or acquire the skills suitable for other jobs in information technology or project management. Similarly, those in advertising and related fields may also be developing the skills for sales, marketing, and management positions.

Kimari

Student Stories

When Kimari was applying for high schools, her interest in art was second to her desire to become a therapist. But when Bronx Medical High School didn't have enough seats, she opted to attend DreamYard Preparatory High School, a school with an arts focus started by the people behind the DreamYard Arts Center. Fast forward to 2020, and Kimari is preparing to attend New York University Tisch School of the Arts as a freshman in the Game Design program.

Attending DreamYard started Kimari down a path that would see her participating in countless arts-related programs, in and out of school. In school, she was part of the MOUSE squad, working on technology issues and training students and teachers, and the DreamYard Arts Center Design League. Throughout her high school career, she has been an intern and game reviewer at the New York Video Game Critic Circle, which was initially designed to be only a four-week internship. She has completed the NYU Future Game Designers program, an intensive 14-week workshop for high school students, and multiple School of Interactive Arts programs. She has competed and won awards at events such as Emoti-con, an annual showcase for New York City's young digital innovators.

As Kimari's interests transitioned from being a therapist to computer science to game design, she says she has always had support from her family. One area where Kimari did face challenges was around a lack of money to support her interests. Other young people participating in some of the programs Kimari was participating in had new iPads, and more advanced—and costly—software such as Photoshop. Kimari was determined to do more with less and utilized free tools that she learned about through DreamYard to create work that put her ahead of her peers.

Kimari is thankful for the opportunities she has had and talks excitedly about BX Start, a new gaming space from the DreamYard Arts Center that should provide even greater opportunities for young people in the Bronx interested in gaming. She is excited that people will have exposure to mentorship and information about the gaming and e-sports industries, including gaming journalism. She feels like these types of opportunities are important for young people to be able to grow their interests in gaming and see what is possible.

For Kimari, anything is possible. She wants to be the best game designer out there, even as she acknowledges the industry is very competitive and dominated by white males, something that she believes does discourage her peers. But that won't stop Kimari. "With enough hard work," she says, "learning from my peers and continuing my pathway, I'll get to the top."

Skill Building

Creative programs build skills that can be applied almost anywhere

In addition to acquiring occupation-specific skills, there is evidence that those who prepare to work in creative fields acquire competencies that are sought after across a range of occupations and industries. This includes the set of competencies commonly identified as social-emotional learning (SEL). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development are just two entities that have established frameworks and prioritized the intentional building of SEL, to go hand-in-hand with academic learning and developing specific occupational skills. The CASEL framework identifies five broad competencies tied to SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.⁸ Each of these competencies is critical to an individual's success in any field and are valued highly by employers.⁹ As we discuss below, research has shown that arts programs can positively impact social and emotional learning and other important outcomes.

In the late 1990s, researchers from the Arts Education Partnership analyzed data from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey and found connections between high involvement in arts learning and general academic success for students spanning eighth through twelfth grade.¹⁰ The study also found relationships between high involvement in the arts and positive attitudes and behaviors such as watching less television and not feeling bored in class. In 2009, the lead researcher from that study looked at data on the same cohort of students and found connections between high involvement in arts learning and continued improved academic outcomes (college-going, college grades); employment (including types of employment); and pro-social behavior such as volunteerism and political participation.

More recently, in 2019, researchers from Rice University conducted the first large-scale randomized control trial of an arts education program in Houston

and found that arts-learning experiences resulted in reductions in disciplinary infractions, increases in compassion for others, and improvements in writing. These effects were especially pronounced among African-American students and students in higher-poverty households, as well as for students with Limited English Proficiency.¹¹

In addition to SEL skills, programming that prepares young people for careers in creative fields can also provide young people with occupational skills that are highly valued by employers across a range of occupations and industries. For example, the ability to create visual representations of data and deliver engaging presentations are skills that can be acquired through creative pathways programming that would be highly valued across job types. The skills that young people acquire in creative or arts programming - from technical skills such as using graphic design software to soft skills including collaboration and problem solving - will prepare them for a wide range of opportunities, including, but not limited to those in creative fields.

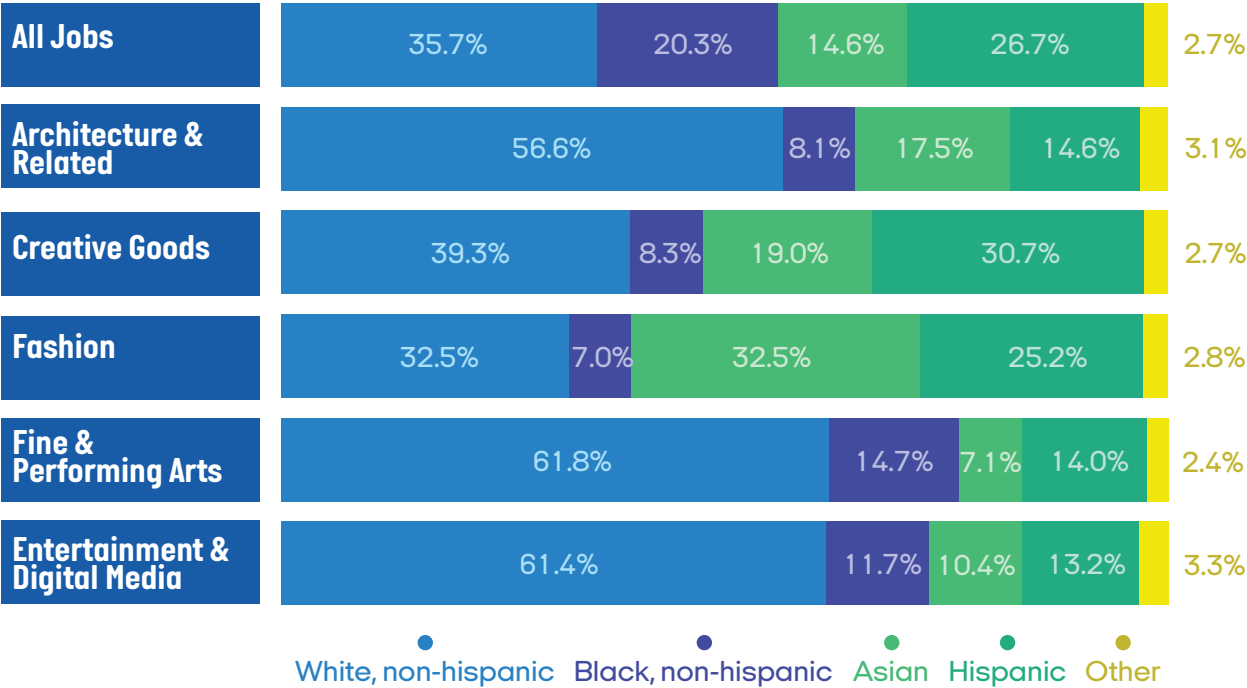
Promoting Equity

Creative career pathways can promote equity

Creative fields represent an opportunity for those engaged in career pathways work to do so with a focus on equity. The creative industries in New York City—specifically the architecture and related services, fine and performing arts, and entertainment and digital media industry groups—do not reflect the racial/ethnic make-up of the New York City workforce. While Black workers make up 20% of the New York City workforce, they make up less than 10% of workers in the fashion, creative goods and products, and architecture and related services industry groups. Black workers, along with Hispanic workers, are also underrepresented in the fine and performing arts and entertainment and digital media industry groups.

We see similar disproportionality when looking at the data for creative postsecondary institutions. While the majority of students in New York City high

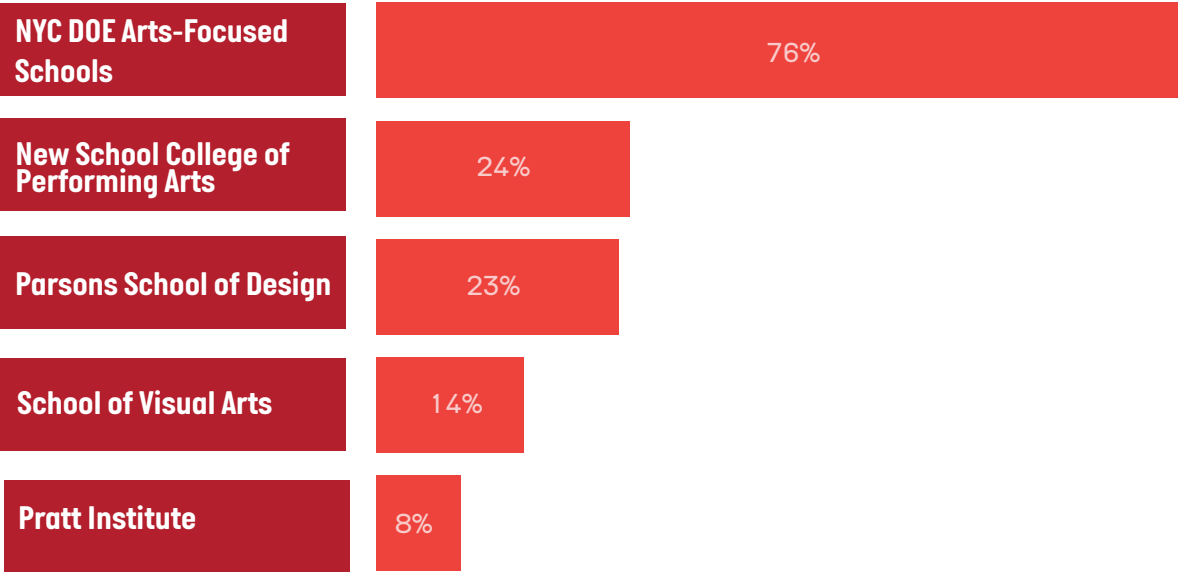
Race/Ethnicity of Workers Living in NYC



Source: Author's analysis of 2013-2017 American Community Survey, five-year estimate

schools that have a creative focus are Black or Hispanic, the racial/ethnic demographics at creative-focused postsecondary institutions are more similar to those in the creative workforce.¹² As the chart below shows, approximately three-quarters of students at arts-focused New York City public high schools are Black or Hispanic; however, fewer than one-quarter of students at some of the city's most well-known, arts-focused postsecondary institutions are Black or Hispanic. Additionally, students of color in arts-focused programs have reported feeling uncomfortable and marginalized due to predominantly white students and faculty.¹³

Students who are Black or Hispanic



As discussed later in this report, there are a variety of reasons why someone in a creative-focused high school would not attend a postsecondary institution with a creative focus. However, there is potential for creative pathways programs to mitigate some of the barriers faced by young people of color in making the transition from creative-focused high schools into creative postsecondary institutions and/or careers.

Embracing the Arts at Lehman College

At CUNY's Lehman College, the lone four-year public college located in the Bronx, there are robust offerings in the arts, and the college is committed to expanding the scope and reach of its programs. In February 2020, with support from the Sara Little Turnbull Foundation, Lehman began an initiative to expand financial and career support for students in the art department, with a focus on design fields. A series of lectures by emerging designers, a group of cross-disciplinary design courses, and design scholarships are features of the program supported by the foundation, and are designed for both the general public and students on the Lehman campus.

According to Susan Ebersole, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, the design initiatives are aimed not only at art students, but at the broader Lehman population. "There's a connectivity to business majors, art majors - they will all get a sense of what these very important fields offer to a young person in creating life goals," says Ebersole. In Spring 2021, the Turnbull speaker series will engage directly with the one of the most politically urgent issues facing the nation today, with their series **Designing Migration: Serving Human Mobility and Justice**. According to Bartholomew Bland, Executive Director of the Lehman College Art Gallery, "We are emphasizing a layered approach, in that the speaker series is designed to support coursework cross-listed with Design and the Department of Latino Studies, and to also engage our public in these issues, fulfilling Lehman's role as an anchor institution in the Bronx."

Lehman is also home to a range of physical spaces devoted to the arts, including visual arts and performing arts centers that often promote the borough's rich Hispanic heritage. The college hopes that these spaces will become a larger part of campus life at Lehman in the years to come, and are exploring new ways to better connect the arts centers with students across disciplines.

Lehman Stages is a professional arts component of **Lehman College**—a unique organization within **CUNY**. As Director of Lehman Stages Dante Albertie states, "Lehman Stages is a hybrid of sorts. Not just a producing and presenting entity – we're a community of professionals who are dedicated to nurturing the emerging artists at Lehman and the Bronx. We create opportunities for young people to work and train not only as performers, but as designers, technicians and arts leaders."

Albertie continues, "We offer apprenticeship programs that lead to real employment and perhaps a lifelong career in the arts. We're currently creating two programs that we're really excited about, a summer technical theatre "boot camp" for high school students, with real hands on training and the opportunities to meet and network with professionals in the field and a non-profits arts incubator, because the next generation of arts leaders MUST come from the Bronx."

Ebersole, who served in a range of creative roles before joining Lehman and trained as a painter herself, stresses the benefits of vibrant and inclusive arts programming, and the viability of the skills acquired in arts programs across occupations and industries. "It's a humanistic way of thinking," Eborsole says. "Design thinking offers you myriad skills and insights in any environment you are in. Design thinking is something that a lot of people in creative fields learn by osmosis—we teach students to absorb the world around them."

The abundance of opportunities in the arts at Lehman College underscores the idea that there are pathways to meaningful careers throughout the arts. "There's a dance program, there's a theatre program, and an M.F.A for part-time, returning, and non-traditional students, you name it" says Ebersole. "The main thing is to really help young people understand that if they don't get into Julliard post-Lehman, there are many other opportunities to create a rich life imbued with art, and a portfolio of endeavors. There are avenues that young people in the arts can go on and secure real livelihoods and meaningful work."

Keilys

Student Stories

As a student at the Academy of Innovative Technology, Keilys is exposed to different opportunities related to game design and technology. However, in order to explore her true passion of dance, she's on her own. Using social media platforms such as Instagram and other online tools, Keilys has found and joined training programs and dance studios. She sees the connection between being forced to find her own opportunities and what it takes to thrive in a creative field. "I learned to seek things out for myself, figure it out myself," she says. "In creative industries, you have to make your own connections and network."

Like many young people with creative interests and career goals, Keilys's parents are supportive of her passion for dance as a hobby, but are less thrilled about it as a career choice. That doesn't stop Keilys from thinking big about her dance aspirations.

Keilys wants to have a career in choreography where she can travel the world and teach classes, but she's not putting all of her eggs in one basket. She is currently an apprentice at Accenture working in digital marketing. She chose to do an apprenticeship in order to get exposure to different career fields. And while she wants to go to a college where dance is a big part of the culture, she says she will double major or minor in dance.

Keilys believes that there are challenges for young people from low-income communities to be able to explore their creative interests. Training and the necessary equipment can be prohibitively expensive. Pressure from parents to follow a certain route and a lack of interest from friends and peers can prevent young people from engaging in creative activities or programs. Keilys also says that many young people—young boys, in particular—in her home community of Brownsville, Brooklyn, simply don't see themselves outside of a certain lifestyle.

Keilys believes more financial support for young people pursuing creative interests would help. She also believes that resources should be more easily accessible and that different opportunities should be presented to young people outside of school, where peers and friends who are not taking the opportunities seriously can be discouraging. Keilys says that the people she is surrounded by don't necessarily share her interests, but she finds support from adults at her school, her dance classes, and even in her apprenticeship.

In addition to potentially addressing the lack of diversity in creative occupations and industries, creative pathways programs can have an impact on representation in other fields in which people of color are underrepresented. As HERE to HERE's recent report, [One Step Closer](#), makes clear, young people of color from low-income backgrounds often lack the social networks and other forms of exposure to high paying occupations and industries. Creative pathways work can provide young people who are limited in their exposure to high paying fields with the opportunities and skills they need to "get in the door" with employers they may otherwise not have access to.

Increasingly, employers are recognizing the value of diverse talent, perspectives, and skill sets.¹⁴ Finding and hiring diverse talent has come to be regarded not as a philanthropic gesture, but as essential in providing employers with the range of perspectives and skills that are necessary to compete in rapidly changing environments. Additionally, employers value creativity as a critical skill. According to a report by the World Economic Forum, creativity was projected to be the third most in-demand skill of employers in 2020 after being ranked number 10 in 2015.¹⁵ Studies by LinkedIn in 2019 and 2020 on the soft skills that companies need most ranked creativity number one.¹⁶ However, in many cases, even when businesses understand the need, they are unsure of where and how to tap diverse and creative talent and expand their recruiting pipeline in a way that can harness the skills of diverse young people and those with creative skills.

As we noted earlier, the promise of moving from high school to postsecondary to a career is too often not delivered for young people of color.¹⁷ The lack of pathways and entry points into fulfilling careers is a major obstacle that career pathways work aims to address. The data from this report supports the idea that for this work to be successful, stakeholders will need to push the boundaries of what traditional pathways programs offer.

Career Obstacles

Young people face a variety of obstacles in their creative career journeys

There are many obstacles for young people who are interested in creative careers. Many students share that they are encouraged [by parents or others] to

explore traditional occupations in STEM and law. According to interviews with staff at the DreamYard Arts Center, located in the Bronx, multiple families have advised students to avoid creative fields, including opportunities in graphic design, due to perceived instability, limited opportunities for advancement, and low-wages.

However, we see that many adult perceptions are not informed by current needs in creative fields. Many employers in creative industries share that they are "hungry for talent." A joint report from the Boston Consulting Group and the Business of Fashion found that "fashion firms are crying out for top talent," especially for design, product, and technology/digital roles. In addition to feeling like they lack access to "the best creative talent," firms also struggle to cultivate a strong leadership pipeline. To address these issues, the report recommended that fashion firms employ strategic workforce planning, cultivate close relationships with schools, and focus on identifying future leaders.¹⁸ Additionally, many traditional businesses and consulting firms have been acquiring creative agencies to expand their competitive advantages and offerings to customers.¹⁹

The notion that creative fields are limited in stable, high-wage opportunities is supported by the stereotype of the struggling actor or musician waiting tables until they receive their big break. Such stereotypes, however, run counter to the reality that there is a wide range of creative occupations and industries with viable pathways for young people into meaningful careers. Young people and parents may not have access to or be aware of creative career pathway opportunities, particularly low-income people of color who are underrepresented in these fields.

An additional challenge for young people looking to start careers in creative roles is that many occupations, particularly those in the entertainment industry, are unionized, and it often takes intentional policies and practices for unions to diversify. However, unions for creative occupations can look to the construction industry, where Black and Latinx representation in union positions has grown due to pre-apprenticeship programs and other strategies aimed at increasing diversity.²⁰

Jerelyn Rodriguez

Community Stories

Jerelyn Rodriguez is the co-founder and CEO of The Knowledge House, a social change organization committed to transforming and empowering the youth of the Bronx by offering them opportunities within the tech field.

The Knowledge House - through their Innovation Fellowship program - offers multiple opportunities for young people to acquire skills that will prepare them for careers in technology, including creative fields such as web design and application development. Through a partnership with multi-platinum recording artist and Bronx native French Montana, they also offer the Karim Kharbouch Coding Fellowship Program for immigrant youth.

Working professionally in education for six years, Jerelyn understood that every student was different and college was not the perfect fit for everyone, but she also believed that everyone was deserving of a high-paying job.

Jerelyn's background was not in technology, but rather filmmaking. During high school, Jerelyn would make short films and understood how the ever evolving tech world reshaped media. "I literally got to witness how technology transformed cinema... it became so efficient for me to make films because technology allowed us to record on HD tapes versus standard tapes that you had to digitize."

Going on their sixth year, The Knowledge House is proud to serve over 1,750 students with a diverse staff hailing from the same communities as their students. Jerelyn points out how important it is for students of color, especially those who come from low income communities, to see themselves reflected in their education as well as their hobbies.

"We knew that we couldn't create that environment [The Knowledge House] if me and my co-founder weren't authentic...I bring my full self as a young black woman from Latinx background in the Bronx and my co-founder brings his full self as a technologist from Brooklyn that was kicked out because of gentrification."

Danny R. Peralta

Community Stories

Danny R. Peralta is the Executive Managing Director at The Point, where he has worked since 2002. The Point, a non-profit organization located in the Hunts Point section of the South Bronx, aims to help reshape youth development as well as the Hunts Point community with cultural and economic revitalization.

The Point uses three main strategies to work toward their mission: arts and cultural work, youth development work and environmental justice work. Danny says, “The Point has been here since 1994. The mission here has been about revitalizing the community from within...using the residents and the community itself as an asset to achieve results that are favorable.”

Danny first arrived at The Point looking for an outlet to house his own creativity. Being into black and white photography, he was looking for a darkroom to develop his film, but when he got there, he received so much more. “What I was really looking for, now that I realize it, I was looking for a community... I was looking for space for my art to live, that wasn’t just my imagination or just for fun. I was interested in using my art for something greater than what I thought it was.”

The Point offers a range of programs in arts and culture, with the goal of cultivating and preserving South Bronx culture and making the arts accessible to Hunts Points residents. These programs include a theatre company, artist in residence programs, exhibits, and creative workshops and courses. “The arts and the creativity kind of give us the imagination that we need to think about the future and how we build our community”, says Danny.

During his time working at The Point, Danny came to understand the importance of granting students financial opportunities while working within a creative environment. He understands the value of each student’s commitment to show up to these programs, fully willing to unleash their creativity in order to make something monumental, and feels as though they should be able to benefit financially from their own creative skills.

“There’s this economic part to it that I thought was very valuable. And maybe we can’t offer a young person a full time salary as an artist, but I can offer you a stipend for coming to programming and for using your creativity and actually monetizing your imagination like others do in that model.”

The Point currently offers in-school, after school, and summer programming to students in grades 1-12. Each year they give stipends to 60-120 students, all of whom are able to work in creative programs of their choosing, enabling the youth of the South Bronx to work in fields that interest them instead of those that suppress their creativity.

“Creating a space for them [the youth] to be who they think they want to be and actually play it out and support that, that’s kind of unheard of – and that’s an important part of our mission.”

Rosalba Rolón

Community Stories

Rosalba Rolon is the Artistic Director at Pregones/Puerto Rican Travelling Theatre, a multigenerational performing ensemble, multidisciplinary arts presenter, and owner/steward of bilingual arts facilities in [The Bronx](#) and [Manhattan](#). Written by Rosalba Rolón.

“There is a connection between those who make art and those who witness it. There are countless ways in which we make art happen—as we have learned over the past months—and countless ways to witness it. And in many instances, to participate in it.” [from my [blog post](#), “...If I Can Make it There...”]

Inspired by the song-anthem “New York, New York”, I am musing about the challenge posed by its lyrics. “If I can make it there, I’ll make it anywhere”. And so, what does it take “to make it in New York”. What does it even mean?

At Pregones/Puerto Rican Traveling Theater (Pregones/PRTT) we have a long history of partnering with educational and philanthropic institutions to provide a space for high school and college students to experience the life of an arts institution through paid internships. The experience is an eye opener for many of them, since most are not familiar with the multiple careers connected to making theater happen. Our hope is that our daily practice at the theater will inspire and connect with the talents and aspiration of our interns.

Their experience ranges from direct contact with artists, designers, production staff and many other professionals that make our work on stage happen. They attend rehearsals, and participate in special meetings and public events. But what is their role? That depends on their own aspirations and talents. For example, one of the young men who joined us in his senior year in high school revealed his passion for digital graphic design. Working with Associate Director Jorge B. Merced, he began to create visual content for our promotions, for our website, for our social media. Today, he is attending college, furthering his training as a designer and working with us on various projects, as one of our key digital/graphic designers. A young woman last year participated in the highly respected National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures Leadership Institute. She attended pre-selected sessions, met a national cohort of Latinx arts professionals and submitted a report on her experience.

Many of our interns are Bronx-based. It is important that they become familiar with as many Bronx arts institutions as possible, and see their potential as destination points where they can sharpen their skills. And it is important for Bronx institutions to continue to offer opportunities whenever possible to the youth of our Borough.



Work Underway

HERE to HERE partners with many stakeholders and a wide range of organizations to address systemic barriers preventing Bronx students from securing a family-sustaining career by the time they are 25 years old. To do this, we uncover, codify, promote, and expand best practices and work with others to realize a youth talent development system that positions Bronx students for success. Below, we highlight some of the organizations that are promoting creative career pathways for young people in the Bronx with whom HERE to HERE most closely partners. There are countless other community-based organizations in the Bronx providing creative programming for young people; see the profiles of The Knowledge House, The Point, and Pregones/PRTT in this report for just a few examples.

DreamYard, a founding partner of HERE to HERE, is the largest arts education provider in the Bronx and a nationally recognized community arts organization that uses the arts, digital tools, and social justice to transform students, schools, and communities. DreamYard has developed an arts learning pathway for young people in PreK-12th grade called the Bronx Arts Learning Community, a one-of-a-kind network of 45 partnering public schools developed in collaboration with the New York City Department of Education and the Ford Foundation. In 2006, DreamYard Preparatory High School was opened and in 2009, in collaboration with BronxPro Real Estate [a unique, mission-driven affordable housing developer], DreamYard developed a multi-arts and digitally integrated Community Art Center that serves over 300 students weekly. In 2019, DreamYard opened BX Start, a gaming center that will provide workshops on entrepreneurship and other community engagement initiatives.

CareerWise New York is the first citywide apprenticeship model bringing three-year learning and working experiences to young people in Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens. For Fall 2020, CareerWise New York expanded their apprenticeship offerings to include creative pathways, with open roles in graphic design. This occupation was selected because of

increased demand from the companies that support the model and from student interest data.

Fjord is a design and innovation consultancy that is part of the global consultancy firm, Accenture. Accenture played an active role on HERE to HERE's Business Council and led the way in the hiring of apprentices for the inaugural cohort of the CareerWise New York apprenticeship program. HERE to HERE and DreamYard have already partnered with Fjord to place students into art and design-based work experiences for the Summer Youth Employment Program. Accenture will continue as part of the recently announced NYC Jobs CEO Council [which absorbed the Business Council], an initiative that will contain CareerWise New York and other efforts aimed at helping young people in New York City make the transition from the classroom into meaningful careers with the city's leading employers.

The Thinkubator was born out of a partnership between The Bronx Private Industry Council [PIC], HERE to HERE, DreamYard, and the DO School. The organization offers four work-based learning experiences for young people from the Bronx: Youth consultancy, internships, apprenticeship, and a youth council. The Thinkubator Solves is a signature youth consultancy program, where cohorts of Innovators [young people] are hired by businesses to help employers solve complex challenges. The human-centered design approach to problem-solving taps the creativity of students, who are able to help businesses solve real-world problems with creative solutions. The Thinkubator, which started under the umbrella of HERE to HERE, is now a standalone 501c3 nonprofit organization.

Finally, **Pathways to Creative Industries** is an organization that trains creative and business leaders to create sustained access to creative opportunities in design, fashion, music, forestry, and other industries. Pathways to Creative Industries hosts AvancebyPCI.com, working with young people to learn about design and business operations in partnership with New York Fashion Week and leaders in music, fashion, and design.



Conclusion & Recommendations

New York City is among a small group of cities that can be considered global creative hubs. And perhaps more than any other place, the myriad cultures of the city can often be studied through the creative output of its communities.

As stakeholders across the education and workforce development landscape consider innovative ways to engage in career pathways work, creative occupations and industries represent an opportunity to merge the unique qualities of New York City with the diverse interests of its young people. While there are programs—both in schools and through community-based organizations—that cater to young people’s interest in the arts, there is more limited scope for young people looking to engage in arts-focused or creative programming with an eye toward career preparation.^{21, 22}

This shouldn’t be the case. The research presented in this report highlights the degree to which creative occupations and industries offer mid-to-high-wage career opportunities for New York City’s young people. Furthermore, research suggests that the skills one develops in creative programs are essential, transferable skills valued by all employers. In contrast to the widely held notion that those engaged in creative pursuits are relegated to make-or-break situations, the reality is that creative programs and employment can provide the foundation for a meaningful career across a range of occupations and industries, and build skills that increase one’s earning power.

It cannot be ignored that though the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted virtually every industry, creative fields have been particularly hard hit. Nationally, employment in the arts, entertainment, and recreation subsector was down 35% in June 2020 from June 2019, compared to 8.6% for all industries. In New York City, creative industry employment was down 65.5% for the same time period, compared to 16.6% for all industries.²³ Furthermore, arts-focused community-based organizations are feeling dramatic effects from the pandemic. According to a survey of nonprofit arts and cultural organizations administered by Americans for the Arts, nearly two-thirds of organizations both nationally and in New York City say the financial impact of the coronavirus has been severe or extremely severe.²⁴

Too often, arts and arts education programming is considered a luxury that is one of the first to go when budgets need to be cut and the last to return when the economy improves. However, given the incredible promise that these programs have—particularly if tied to a meaningful career path—it is important that we reverse this trend as the city and nation recover from the fallout of Covid-19. We must keep young people at the heart of our economic recovery; by not meaningfully investing in ways to engage young people with pathways that speak to their interests and abilities, we will be doing a disservice not only to the students but also to local communities and the economy as a whole.

With the findings of this report in mind, we recommend the following steps to better connect young people with creative interests to opportunities to inform a creative career path:

Increase messaging to students, teachers, and caregivers on the viability of creative careers

Among the barriers faced by young people of color who are interested in creative careers is the fact that parents, teachers, and others providing guidance often steer them into what are perceived to be more stable careers. We recommend that the City, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and high schools work together to increase messaging to young people and their caregivers on the viability and stability of creative careers, including an emphasis on the existence of creative careers within industries that are perceived to be more stable. This could take the

form of an informational campaign within high schools on how creative interests can translate into careers in a variety of occupations and industries, as well as guidance on the high schools and CBOs that offer programming for specific interests.

Provide opportunities for advising and mentorship from professionals of color in creative fields

As mentioned earlier in this report, Black and Latinx workers are underrepresented in many creative sectors in New York City. This represents an opportunity to engage students and their parents, families, and teachers on creative fields in a way that is tailored to communities of color. We recommend that arts-focused high schools and CBOs work together to create advising and mentorship opportunities whereby young people of color with creative interests are able to meet and learn from professionals in creative fields who are of a similar geographic, demographic, and/or socio-economic background.

Devote greater resources to support low-income young people in arts programming

There is a clear need for support for students that are interested in creative industries and the programs that serve them. As stated earlier in this report, many students we interviewed believe that there are barriers for young people from low-income communities to be able to explore their creative interests. Additionally, the program leaders highlighted in this report have shared that there is tremendous demand from students to explore creative industries and that additional resources are needed to meet the demand. We recommend that the City establish a public-private partnership fund that will provide arts-focused CBOs with the resources they need to provide programming to those who are interested and to provide young people with the necessary tools and equipment they need to participate in such programming.

Explore a CDOS creative career pathway in New York City Department of Education high schools

The New York City Department of Education should explore the possibility of targeting creative programming and work experiences as part of the [CDOS credential](#). The CDOS, or the Career Development and Occupational Studies commencement credential, is a skills certificate that recognizes student readiness for entry-level

employment. Students can earn the CDOS credential either as a substitute for one Regents exam (the 4+1 model) or to endorse a complete Regents diploma. Students in arts experiences could earn “stackable” credentials where they gain credit, the ability to graduate with a Regents diploma through 4+1, and the 21st-century skills that the arts are well-positioned to help build.

Create more creative pathway linkages at CUNY

Although CUNY currently offers a number of courses and programs to support students who are interested in creative fields, we recommend that classroom learning be coupled with work-based learning experiences in companies across the city. These connections will provide real-world learning experiences while giving students the ability to access NYC-based social networks. The MediaMKRS program (part of the arts-focused nonprofit Reel Works) has partnered with the City and CUNY to offer paid media internships, workforce readiness training and industry-backed credentials for Reel Works and CUNY students seeking careers in media and entertainment. We recommend that these types of partnerships be expanded to cover the range of creative occupations and industries that exist in New York City, and that both the DOE and CUNY explore the creation of pre-apprenticeship programs for creative occupations, such as those that exist for the construction industry.²⁵

Focus creative industry and pathway investment in the Bronx

The Bronx has a longstanding presence in New York creative industries. As the birthplace of hip hop and other global art forms, fashion legends such as Ralph Lauren, and more recent companies such as Silvercup Studios, the Bronx continues to be a force of creative inspiration and innovation. The Bronx also has high school graduation, post-secondary enrollment, and employment rates that are the lowest of the five boroughs. There exists an incredible opportunity to utilize the strengths of the Bronx as a cultural and creative hub to improve the education and employment outcomes of its young people. We recommend that the Bronx be placed at the center of future investment for creative career pathway initiatives.

Endnotes

1 Elise Gould et al. Class of 2019: College Edition. Economic Policy Institute. May 2019. Available from <https://www.epi.org/publication/class-of-2019-college-edition/>

2 Otis College of Art and Design [prepared by Beacon Economics]. 2019 Otis Report on the Creative Economy. 2019.

3 Abbie Fentress Swanson. The South Bronx: Where Hip-Hop Was Born. WNYC News. August 2, 2010. Available at <https://www.wnyc.org/story/89709-south-bronx-hip-hop-year-zero/>

4 Kalima Rose et al. Creating Change Through Arts, Culture, and Equitable Development: A Policy and Practice Primer. PolicyLink. 2017. Available at https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/report_arts_culture_equitable-development.pdf

5 Cary Funk and Kim Parker. Women and Men in STEM Often at Odds Over Workplace Equity. Pew Research Center. January 2018. Available at <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/01/09/women-and-men-in-stem-often-at-odds-over-workplace-equity/>

6 David J. Deming and Kadeem L. Noray. STEM Careers and the Changing Skills Requirements of Work. National Bureau of Economic Research. June 2019.

7 Our industry analysis borrows from the methodology found in the 2019 Otis Report on the Creative Economy, commissioned by the Otis College of Art and Design and prepared by Beacon Economics. That report focuses specifically on Los Angeles County. We use the Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census on Employment and Wages to analyze employment and wage data after identifying subsectors that are placed into one of five creative industry groupings: Architecture and Related Services; Creative Goods and Products; Fashion; Entertainment and Digital Media; and Fine and Performing Arts.

8 CASEL. Core SEL Competencies. Available from <https://casel.org/core-competencies/>

9 National Network of Business and Industry Associations. Common employability skills: A foundation for success in the workplace: The skills all employees need, no matter where they work. 2014. Available from http://businessroundtable.org/sites/default/files/Common%20Employability_asingle_fm.pdf

10 James Catterall. Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art: The Effects of Education in the Visual and Performing Arts on the Achievements and Values of Young Adults. 2009. Los Angeles/London: Imagination Group/I-Group Books.

11 Daniel H. Bowen, Ph.D. and Brian Kisida, Ph.D. Investigating Causal Effects of Arts Education Experiences: Experimental Evidence from Houston's Arts Access Initiative. February 2019. Rice University Kinder Institute for Urban Research.

12 Our analysis includes 58 high schools and four postsecondary institutions that have an arts or creative focus as determined by the name of the school and/or prior knowledge of the authors. Data for arts-focused postsecondary programs within comprehensive postsecondary institutions was not publicly available.

13 Miranda Livingston, Tisch Students Encounter Racial Insensitivity in Drama Program. April 9th, 2018. Washington Square News. Available from <https://nyunews.com/2018/04/08/04-09-news-tisch/>

14 David Rock and Heidi Grant. "Why Diverse Teams are Smarter." November 2016. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2016/11/why-diverse-teams-are-smarter>

15 World Economic Forum. The Future of Jobs: Employment, Skills, and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. January 2016.

16 Deanna Pate. "The Skills that Companies Need Most in 2020 and How to Learn Them." January 2020. LinkedIn Learning Blog.

17 HERE to HERE analysis of data from the New York City Department of Education and CUNY shows that for every 100 students starting high school, only 27 will go on to receive a postsecondary degree.

18 Sara Willersdorf et al. Minding the Talent Gap: Fashion and Luxury's Greatest Challenge for the Next Decade. Boston Consulting Group. October 2014. Available at <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2014/leadership-talent-human-resources-consumer-products-minding-talent-gap-fashion-luxury>

19 Tony Walford. Expect More Agency Acquisitions as Consultancies Battle to Keep Up With Each Other. The Drum. May 2019. Available at <https://www.thedrum.com/opinion/2019/05/10/expect-more-agency-acquisitions-consultancies-try-keep-up-with-each-other>

20 Lawrence Mishel. Diversity in the New York City Union and Nonunion Construction Sectors. Economic Policy Institute. March 2017. Available at <https://www.epi.org/publication/diversity-in-the-nyc-construction-union-and-nonunion-sectors/>

21 Visit <https://www.pathwaystocreativeindustries.com/welcome> for a list of programs that offer exposure to art, design, fashion, music and other creative industries

22 Such programs are limited, but not non-existent. Visit <https://www.reelworks.org/media-mkrs> and brooklynsteamcenter.org for two examples of programs preparing young people for careers in creative occupations and industries.

23 Based on the author's analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data

24 The Economic Impact of Coronavirus on the Arts and Culture Sector. Americans for the Arts. Available at <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/disaster-preparedness/the-economic-impact-of-coronavirus-on-the-arts-and-culture-sector>

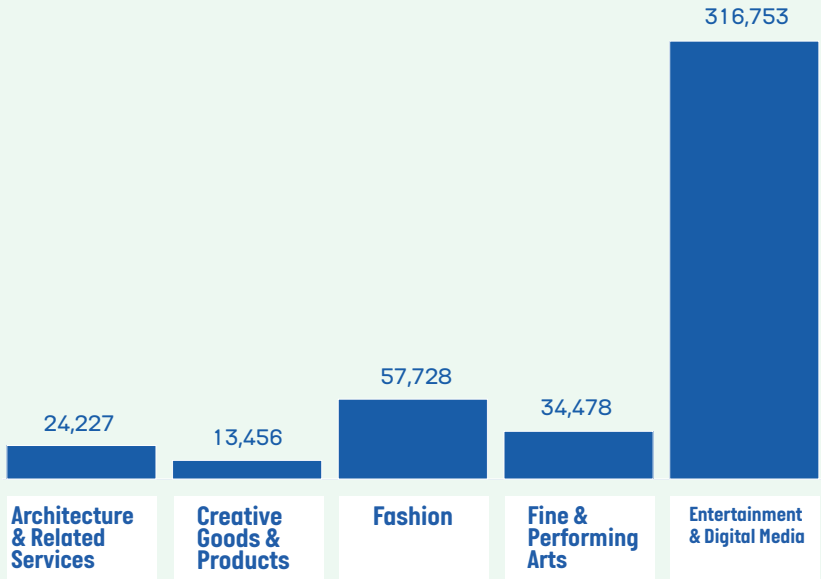
25 Visit p2atrades.org for an example of pre-apprenticeship programs in construction

Appendix

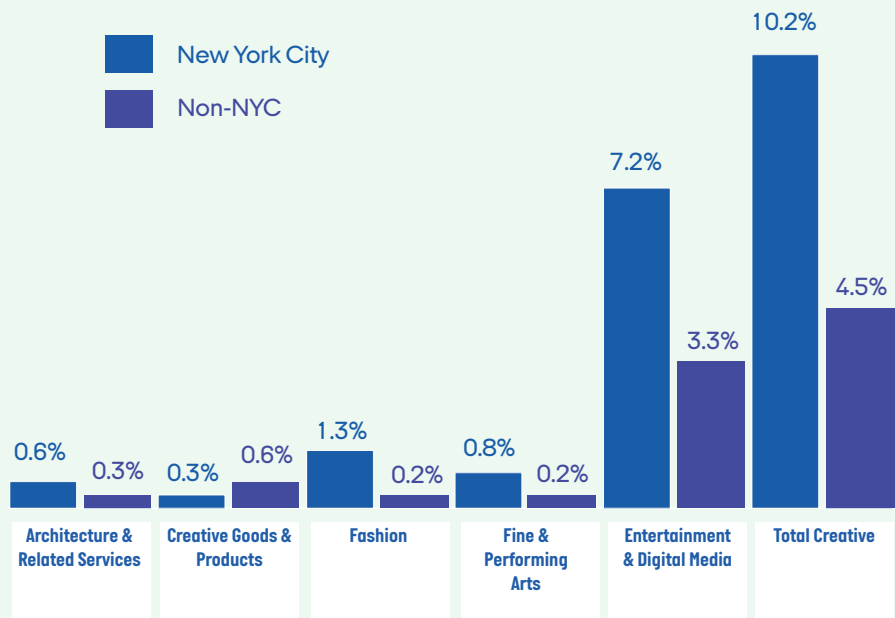
Data for Creative Industries in New York City

Our industry analysis borrows from the methodology found in the 2019 Otis Report on the Creative Economy, commissioned by the Otis College of Art and Design and prepared by Beacon Economics. That report focuses specifically on Los Angeles County. We use the Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census on Employment and Wages to analyze employment and wage data after identifying subsectors that are placed into one of five creative industry groupings: Architecture and Related Services; Creative Goods and Products; Fashion; Entertainment and Digital Media; and Fine and Performing Arts.

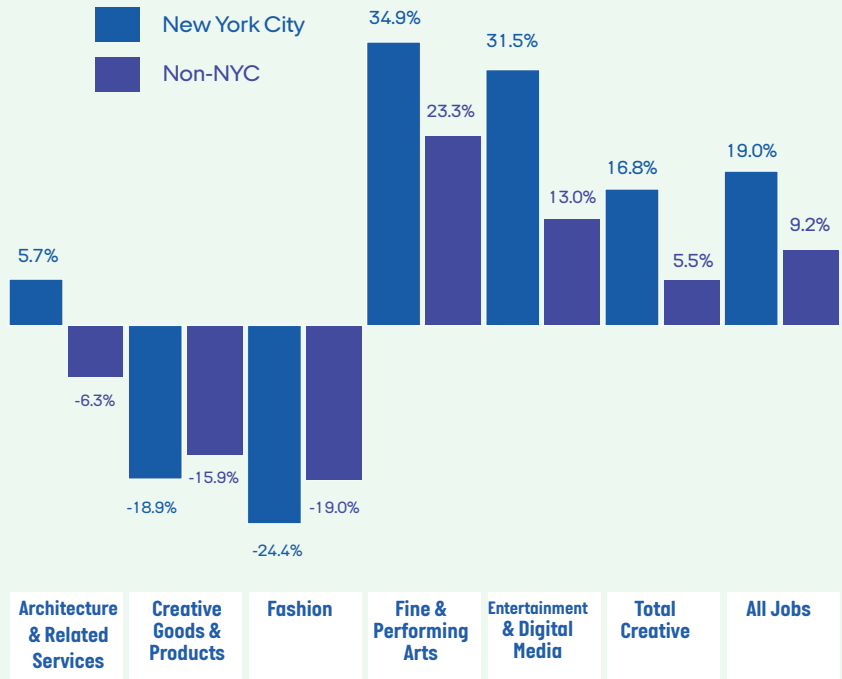
Number of Jobs In Creative Industries, NYC



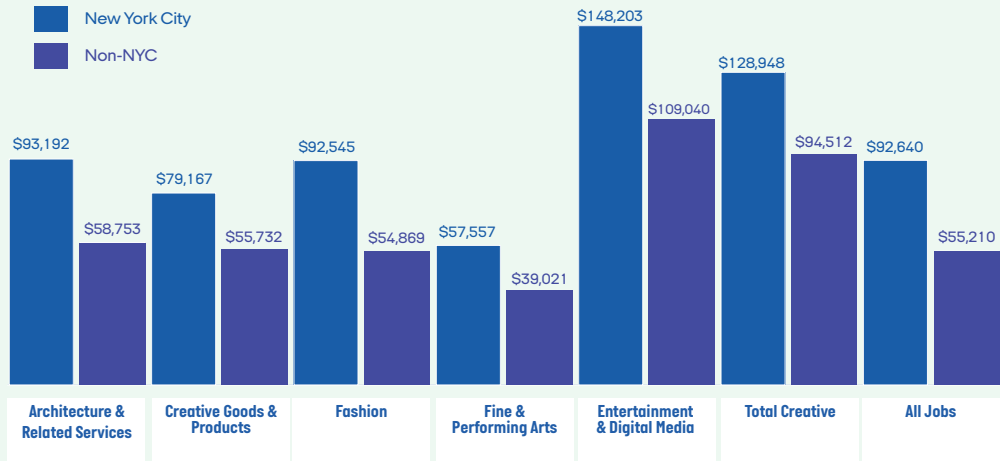
Creative Industry Share of Total Employment



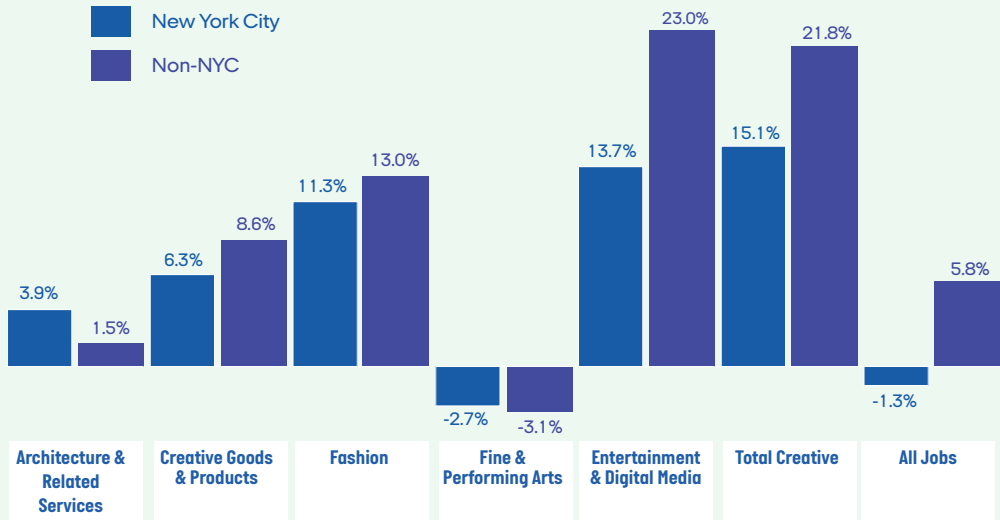
Change in Employment from 2008-2018



Average Annual Salary



Change in Annual Average Salary From 2008-2018





HERE TO HERE

452 East 149th Street, Suite 200
Bronx, NY 10455
heretohere.org



CareerWise
New York
MODERN YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP

careerwisenyork.org

PATHWAYS TO CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

>>>>>>>>>>>>>

pathwaystocreativeindustries.com