

Surviving The Odds Project

Empowering Youth Through Musical Self-Expression

Project Summary

STOP teaches students both technical expertise and practical life skills, most importantly healthy coping mechanisms through songwriting, studio editing, and music video production. The core purpose of the program is to provide a positive and constructive space for self-expression to underserved young people in the community. Writing original song lyrics about personal life experiences gives youth a platform in which to find their voice. Throughout the semester, students gain practical skills for pursuing a career in music and valuable mentoring from the Teaching Artists.

Ideally a professional recording studio will be installed on campus where students have the opportunity work one-on-one with industry professionals and earn elective credits towards graduation. They will also receive an Audio and/or Video Production skills certificate upon completion of the semester.

The physical arrangements of the on-campus program will transform according to the current health guidelines. We can hold several of the group lessons online via zoom, which will cover orientation, group interactive activities, and technical skills classes. There will be smaller one-on-one sessions where social distancing will easily be accomplished.

Classes are structured where the first half is group instruction, and the second hour is for one-on-one breakout sessions. The studio will be available to students after school and during lunch hour as needed. There are four main components to the program – mixing and mastering instrumental beats, composing original song lyrics, creating a music video, and performing the song live in concert.

During the mixing and mastering instrumental beats program, students learn about how to create a song from scratch. We will use several industry standard software programs such as GarageBand and Pro-Tools. They train on professional equipment such as The Machine, MKAudio Keyboards, and Yamaha Speakers. For peer mentors, studio design, set up, and audio troubleshooting are covered in depth.

Students also learn how to write an original song, including song structure, composition and lyrical content and are also shown how to navigate the song recording environment. This includes voice projection, annunciation, how to use a microphone and headset, and how to interact with a producer during a live recording session. More importantly, they transform their painful life experiences into a healing work of art.

Creating a coordinating music video also adds a valuable visual component to the students' self-expression. The participants learn story-boarding and how to assist on set. Peer mentors are involved in the directing and editing process and learn how to use FinalCut ProX. Finally, regulation-permitting, we hold a live concert and graduation for the public. In both of these components the students learn about image and professionalism, body language, and stage presence.

After certification, youth will be invited to apply their skills to future STOP programs and become a peer mentor. There are also production internship opportunities.