



2010 FACT SHEET

Summary

Unchained Talent is a place where the students' voice matters. Students work together to write and perform their own music, drama and dance material for their family, peers, and a diverse audience from the Baltimore community.

Mission



The mission of Unchained Talent is:

- to educate, inspire and change young people through access to the performing arts,
- to re-energize school communities by providing performing arts opportunities in under-used school spaces, and
- to respond to young people's development needs through consistent positive adult mentor relationships.

Goals



Students will have:

- access to participate in and enjoy the performing arts,
- higher attendance rates and better grades,
- a deeper understanding of self and community and
- a richer educational experience to prepare themselves for their futures.

Program Summary



Unchained Talent is the youth-driven performing arts and mentoring program, using the arts as a hook to keep youth engaged in their education and their lives. Unchained Talent was born in response to the lack of performing arts opportunities offered in our urban schools, which can bring young people to school and inspire them to perform academically. The program enables them to learn leadership, advocacy and life skills through mentorship and peer relationships in preparation for a productive future, to learn about themselves and others by experiencing the outside world through performing arts and to have their voices heard through the arts.



Unchained Talent has grown organically in response to students needs. Each site includes:

- After-school programming that is safe, productive, and team-oriented
- Honest, student-original theatre, music created in in-house Recording Studio and dance works culminating in 2-3 original and repertory theatre, music and dance performances
- Mentoring relationships with reliable consistent adult mentors
- Life skills trainings, such as financial management, health, and accountability
- Job skills trainings including basic jobs skills, understanding what professionalism is, and specialized performing arts competencies

Population Served



Unchained Talent serves some of the most underserved yet talented youth in Baltimore City's public schools. These students come from communities ravaged by poverty, academic under-achievement, school/community violence and a lack of community resources. Unchained Talent is currently serving four school communities through after-school programming, in-school elective courses and project-based academic support.

Track Record

Since 2004, Unchained Talent has grown from a dream with one part-time volunteer to a \$250,000 per year, 501(c)3 non-profit organization led by an Open Society Institute Fellow Alumna. It began with ten students and now has over 150 students enrolled. Almost every consistent Unchained Talent student is still enrolled in or has graduated school.

“My godmother says I cannot go to drama if I don't go to school, so I go to school.”
-Arkeena Reid, founding student member and Unchained Talent alumna

Program Impact



- In 2008, 86% of active Unchained Talent students graduated high school with a diploma in four years, compared with the city-wide average of 63% and the average graduation rate of 45% at the three schools Unchained Talent serves.
- 80% of those Unchained Talent students who did not graduate on time have begun working on their career, are in a job-training program earning their GED, or have returned to high school to earn a diploma.
- Unchained Talent students have developed enough self-confidence, assertiveness and positive reputation in the school through their roles on stage that they are able to step up as leaders in the school community.
- Unchained Talent alumni are now studying at Salisbury University, Community College of Baltimore County, University of Baltimore, Stevenson University, Morgan State University, and more.

Some Past Shows



- **HOPE is...:** *Performed May 2009.* Drawing on their own experience, the reflections of their community and that unique moment in our nation's history, Unchained Talent students wrote an original play featuring music and dances to inspire themselves and their audience to answer the question "How can we be the hope for the future?"
- **Concrete Jungle:** *Performed May 2008.* A student-written and -directed full-length hip-hop musical following the lives of several diverse characters struggling to make it in the "Concrete Jungle."
- **Fame! The Musical:** *Performed April 20, 2007.* A moving and inspirational musical about the value and reward of hard work, based on the lives of a group of students attending New York's High School for the Performing Arts.
- **World HIV/AIDS Day:** *original songs and skits addressing stigma and prevention*
- **Who Will Heal Our Community?:** *Performed November 17, 2006.* A production designed to inspire discussion about our community, its needs, and our responsibility to it. *Performed in partnership with WombWork Productions.*
- **Generationships:** *Performed December 9-10, 2005.* A play of student-original work exploring the relationships between the generations.
- **Unified:** *Performed December 9-10, 2004.* An evening of showcase performances featuring well-known favorites, unique pieces and original works.

Community Partnerships



In addition to its ongoing partnerships with the schools it serves, Unchained Talent partners with other youth development organizations, social change agents, area theatres, and organizations promoting state-wide arts education:

- A 2008-09 collaboration with Run of the Mill Theatre produced an original choreopoem musical play entitled *Hope is...*
- Follow Your Dreams technical support helped build our Recording Studio program
- Our Montebello Police Athletic League (PAL) Center partnership allowed our students to develop their arts and work skills by providing a free summer theatre camp.

Why Performing Arts



Performing arts teach one to:

- take positive risks and problem solve,
- develop empathy, self-confidence, responsibility, self-control, concentration, discipline, and self-expression,
- strengthen skills in writing, reading, algebra, geometry, history, geography, carpentry, teamwork, finances, project planning, presentation skills and business management.

Colleges seek out and select students who participate in extracurricular activities and possess these skills.

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