

2020

ONE
COMMON
UNITY



ANNUAL REPORT

DEAR FRIEND,

It is my honor to present our 2020 Annual Report. In this report, you will find information about One Common Unity's (OCU) programs and how our work serves to heal, inspire, and build healthy and resilient communities through the transformative power of music, art, and peace education. This year our annual report highlights the inspiring story of how our staff, students, families, and school partners coped with the COVID-19 health crisis that continues to impact our world.

The year 2020, was incredibly challenging for all of us. We grappled with a pandemic, an economic crisis, and the debilitating and compounding impact of systemic racism. Families and educators struggled to figure out how students can safely return to classrooms and, more importantly, what kind of support would be necessary to minimize the disruption to their learning and development. While these are essential questions for all youth and their families, they are especially critical in communities that have experienced the pernicious effects of structural and institutional racism.

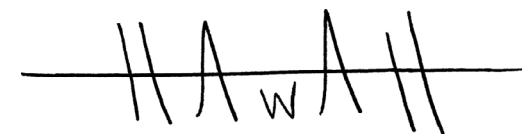
However, challenges present opportunities.

Despite the grief, sadness, and pain of 2020, we found many moments of joy, innovation, and hope throughout our community. We thank you for leaning into these tools during our most challenging times and being steadfast in your commitment to students' mental health and social-emotional learning.

In the words of Helen Keller, ***"a bend in the road is not the end of the road unless you fail to make the turn."*** The year 2020 will long be remembered for the many unforeseen twists and turns that we navigated together and created more possibilities for success.

We are so grateful to the many people whose support and encouragement helped us through this unique year. We are especially thankful to our Board of Directors, staff, school partners, generous donors, and the students and families that make up our resilient community.

In Peace and Gratitude,



Hawah Kasat,
Co-founder and Executive Director



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OUR MISSION



One Common Unity (OCU) breaks cycles of violence and builds compassionate, healthy communities through the transformative power of music, arts, and peace education.

OUR STORY

This year was an exceptional year for One Common Unity, as it marked our 20th year in service.

Our 20-year impact:

- OCU has impacted more than 32,900 youth, ages 11-18, and families through after-school programming, summer retreats, community engagement opportunities, and city-wide campaigns;
- worked in 52 schools throughout the DC region;
- produced five full-length youth music albums;
- and hosted 87 concerts and community art showcases;
- Mental Health Programs
- And trained 11,500 teachers and youth workers



June 2020, Hawah Kasat leads a peaceful Black Lives Matter protest in Washington, DC

OUR STORY

2000



Revel Youth Shine (RYS)

OCU provided arts education, music therapy, non-violence, and leadership development training in the summer months to over 200 inner-city youth, ages 14 - 18, living in Washington, DC, through our “RYS Above the Violence” summer youth initiative. During the RYS program, we took the youth through an intensive learning process to write, record, and ultimately produce their own music CDs that sang of hope, inspiration and communicated their stories of struggle and success. This process led to the creation of five full-length, original music albums.

2006–2013



Young Women’s Drumming Empowerment Project (YWDEP)

Over 60 young women from DC high schools participated in drumming, poetry, dance, theater, and self-esteem workshops. This program also created dozens of performance opportunities, where we showcased our youth’s talents to their communities.

One Common Unity is born!

Following a string of school shootings in Washington, DC, a group of educators and artists came together to catalyze a community-wide shift away from violence and poverty.



2003–2007

Children’s Defense Fund “Freedom Schools” Teacher Training Program

OCU trained approximately 8,400 teachers and community organizers from around the country in social-emotional learning and non-violence in the classroom, recognizing that for many low-income youth and youth of color, school teachers and administrators may be their primary support network.



2006–2009

OUR STORY

2008–2011



Fly By Light (FBL)

Our flagship program, Fly By Light, has directly impacted over 13,500 youth and indirectly reached thousands more. Through Fly By Light (FBL), we bring together educators, artists, musicians, and community leaders to amplify youth voices and shift the paradigm of violence in our society.

Our students participate in school-based and out-of-school workshops, weekend field trips, healing nature retreats, community violence prevention days, as well as school- and community-wide art and music performances. They emerge from Fly By Light as more active and engaged community members, empowered to create a positive impact on their own lives and throughout their communities.

Our program is structured around five core pillars:

Artistic Expression, Health and Wellness, Environmental Leadership, Social-Emotional Literacy, and Social Justice. We designed these pillars to help students find their inner light—and use that light to fly.

A Nu View (Youth Filmmaking Program)

In association with Straight, No Chaser Productions, One Common Unity birthed and facilitated the youth filmmaking program “A Nu View.” This program engaged 38 teenagers in the art of filmmaking (how to run lighting, sound, cameras, and more.), scriptwriting, social justice, and conflict resolution. This program produced two youth-directed documentary films (“A Weigh with Words” and “The MLK Streets Project”) that were used as curriculum in several schools around the nation— spreading messages of hope and resilience throughout their communities.



2011–PRSNT



OUR STORY

2013



National Park Service named Fly By Light as one of "America's Best Ideas"



Fly By Light Documentary

Since its premiere, our award-winning documentary film has been featured at 16 film festivals and viewed by tens of thousands of people.



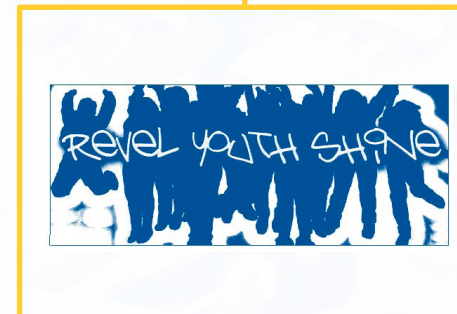
2014

2017



OCU received the Mayor's Arts Award for Excellence in the Humanities

The Catalogue for Philanthropy selected OCU as "one of the best" non-profit organizations in Washington, D.C.



2018



Hawah Receives Legacy of a Dream Award

Georgetown University awarded our co-founder and Executive Director, Hawah Kasat, the "John Thompson Jr. Legacy of a Dream Award"

2019



Launched the Fly By Light National Training and certification program, sharing our unique model and 190+ page curriculum with educators and youth workers from around the world.

OUR STORY

Mental Health Expansion

OCU partnered with the Department of Behavioral Health and District of Columbia Public Schools as an inaugural recipient of the Comprehensive School-Based Based Mental Health Expansion grant, through which we placed full-time mental health clinicians at 14 DC public and public charter schools. To date, OCU has provided individual therapy support services to nearly 200 students and their families.



2019-PRSENT

CELEBRATING
20
YEARS OF SERVICE

To commemorate OCU's year of service, we began sharing 20 of our favorite stories that tell the story of our evolution into the dynamic, impactful organization we have become.

You can view these inspiring stories [HERE](#).

2020 IN NUMBERS

399 | **students** directly engaged in **Fly By Light** Programming

Delivered programming across **20** schools.



111 | **youth** engaged in approximately **140 hours of FBL programming**, including after-school workshops, both in-person and via virtual platforms.

126 | **youth** participated in between **8-40 hours of programming** through a variety of in-school workshops tailored to meet the requirements of each school.

196 | **students** built awareness of self-care practices, social-emotional literacy, or restorative justice through school-wide assemblies or other school-wide initiatives.

3,047 | one-on-one mental health therapy sessions provided

379 | **students** participated in group therapy sessions

86 | **families** received Family Psychotherapy

225 | **students** participated in the LifeSkills evidence-based intervention

110 | **students** participated in Intention Room activities

364 | **teachers** participated in professional development training

23 | **parents and family members** participated in family engagement sessions

1,599 | **adults and students** engaged through additional COVID related training, talkbacks, and artistic expression

OUR PARTNER SCHOOLS

Ward 3

- Oyster-Adams Bilingual Middle School (FBL)
- Alice DEAL Middle School (Mental Health Clinician)

Ward 1

- Cardozo Middle School (FBL)

Ward 2

- School Without Walls High School (FBL)
- Deal Middle School (FBL and Mental Health Clinician)

Ward 6

- Stuart- Hobson MS (FBL and Mental Health Clinician)
- Eastern Senior High School (FBL, Intention Room, Mental Health Clinician)
- Richard Wright PCS for Journalism and Media Arts (Mental Health)

Ward 4

- Roosevelt High School (FBL, Intention Room, and Mental Health Clinician)
- Paul Public Charter School (FBL and Mental Health Clinician)
- Whittier Education Campus (Mental Health Clinician)
- Takoma Education Campus (Mental Health Clinician)

Ward 5

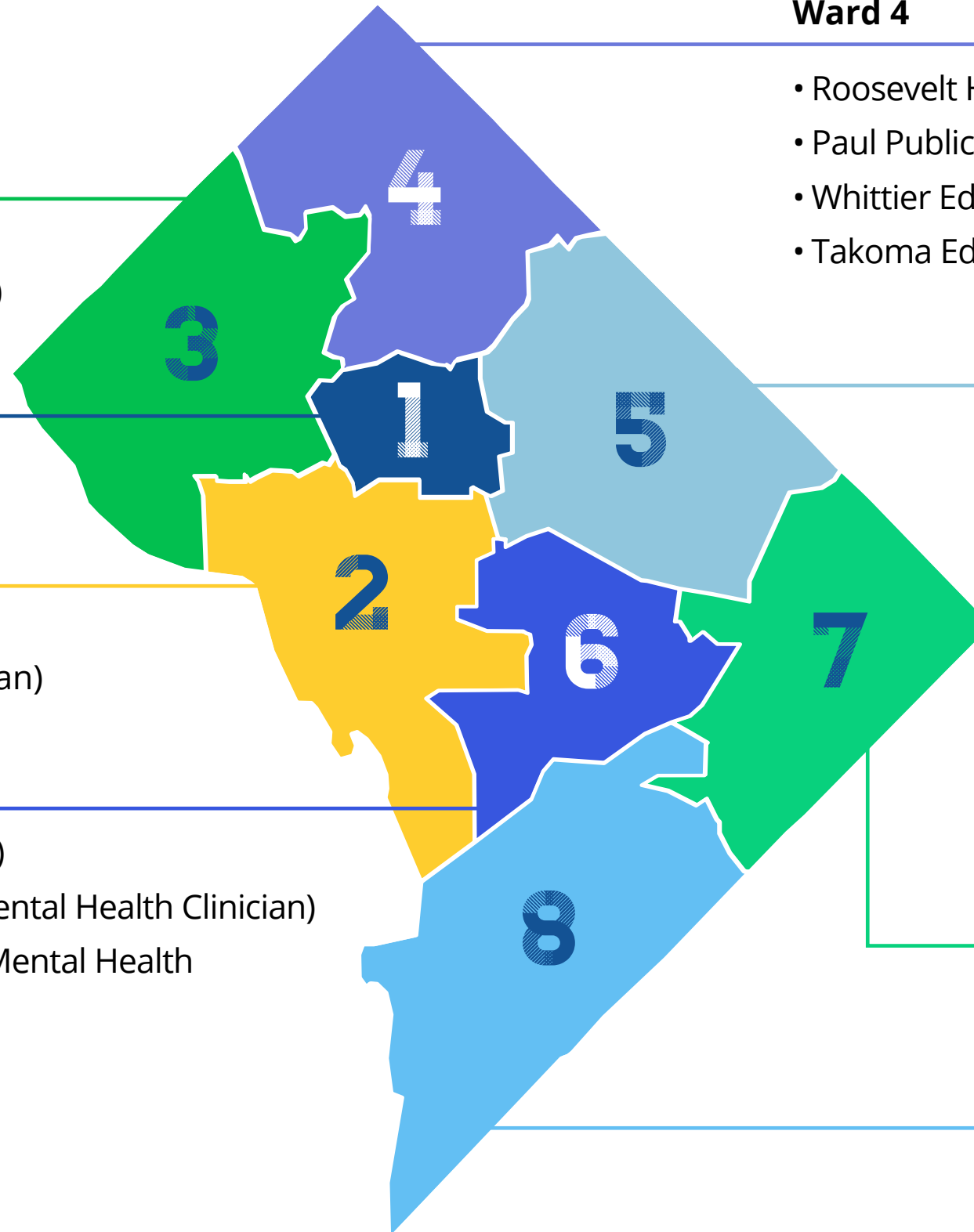
- Dunbar High School (FBL)
- Perry Street Preparatory Public Charter School (FBL and Mental Health Clinician)
- Browne Education Campus (FBL and Mental Health Clinician)
- Mary McLeod Bethune Day Academy PCS (Mental Health Clinician)
- Wheatley Education Campus (Mental Health Clinician)

Ward 7

- SEED Public Charter School (Mental Health Clinician)

Ward 8

- Thurgood Marshall Public Charter School (Mental Health Clinician)





FLY BY LIGHT

FLY BY LIGHT

In response to COVID-19, we quickly pivoted by shifting our programming and embracing online platforms to continue to support our students, families, and school partners in the most meaningful and impactful way possible. Our Program Facilitators engaged in-school and after-school Fly By Light chapters through virtual means. In addition to meeting with their Fly By Light chapters, facilitators also offered weekly virtual Fly By Light programming to the broader OCU community.



FLY BY LIGHT IMPACT

One Common Unity Partnered with Georgetown University's Center for Social Justice.

When compared with peers who did not participate in Fly by Light, students in Fly by Light exhibited:

21.55%

increase in confidence



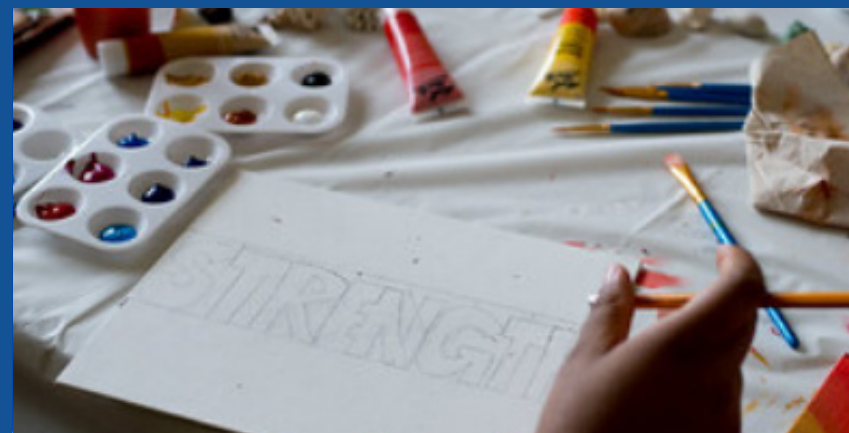
15.06%

increase in the practice of creative arts outside of school or afterschool



17.90%

decrease in their sense that they are "always failing"



10.26%

stronger peer relationships



14.76%

improvement in concentration skills



7.71%

increase in the use of art to imagine a more just and peaceful world

SPECIAL FLY BY LIGHT COHORTS

Organizing Troupe

We are so proud of our inaugural Organizing Troupe cohort, who held their first day-long retreat in January! This youth-led program grew out of a summer retreat in 2019 where Fly By Light youth ambassadors posed the question: “Why don’t we come together more often to make bigger change across the city?” Students representing eight different high schools came together each week to discuss what’s happening in DC and how to create systemic change through mindful arts activism. They worked together to craft their own vision statement: “To build a safe community that supports and empowers youth through advocating and breaking down oppressive systems for a more accessible life experience.”

Performance Troupe

Our FBL Performance Troupe, composed of highly skilled performing artists (musicians, rappers, poets, and a comedian), formed this year amidst the pandemic and chose the name, Elements of Light. Members of Elements of Light performed at Roosevelt High Schools’ Thanksgiving basket distribution event on November 24, called “Giving Back Full Circle,” delivering performances to an audience of students and families. They also performed virtually for an audience of 134 students at an Honor Roll Assembly at Roosevelt HS on December 2. Lastly, the Performance Troupe hosted an open workshop for District youth focused on lyric writing and the music business, featuring international hip-hop recording artist and educator, Substantial, on December 3.



EVENTS

Mother-Daughter Dinner & Retreat

On February 27, our entire program team joined our Program Facilitator and Performance Troupe Director, Princess Best, in organizing a Mother-Daughter Dinner at Dunbar High School. It was a wonderful evening for creating space for mother-daughter connections, discussion, and performances over great food. And this was just the beginning—we had our first ever Mother-Daughter retreat on March 7. The retreat was a beautiful day as mothers and daughters participated in yoga, painting, dancing, and powerful dialogues with one another.



International Academy Student Retreat

On February 19 - 21, OCU Program Facilitator, Jair Carrasco, led a three-day retreat at the Josephine Butler Parks Center, geared towards International Academy Students from Roosevelt High School and Wilson High School, who are immigrants to the United States from Latin America. The students were able to build community, practice mindfulness, and explore creativity. They also dove deep into the social justice issues that affect them and their communities and explored organizing strategies to create meaningful change.

VIRTUAL SHOWCASES & COMMUNITY EVENTS

Fly By Light Online

Beginning in the summer, our facilitators launched a series of community virtual FBL events, including a weekly “Music Monday” session with Princess Best, “Tune-In Tuesday” with Princess Best, “Mindful Art” with Tyler Grigsby, “Parenting by Light” with Princess Best, and “Drop Everything and Dance” with Johnee Wilson. Over 300 community members across 130 hours of online programming, participants of all ages, and across the country tuned in for these special events!

Virtual Summer Showcase

OCU was proud to host our first-ever virtual showcase on May 27. It was an evening of healing, hope, and connection, featuring local artists: Alixa Garcia (from Climbing PoeTree), John Johnson, and Kanikki J, as well as the talent, artwork, and voices of our Fly By Light students—reaching over 3,000 people around the world!

The Soul of a Crisis - Weekly Vigil and Meditation Series

Recognizing the already devastating effects of COVID-19, in March 2020, our Executive Director, Hawah Kasat launched “The Soul of a Crisis” series to bring our community together to reflect on the moral, existential, psychological, and revolutionary impacts this virus is having on humanity. It began as a daily vigil and meditation for two weeks, then transitioned into a weekly healing space for months to come. Over 400 community members explored how to move through the global pandemic with grace, love, and surrender. Hawah revived this virtual space through a November 6 vigil to help ease the growing anxiety and stress the election caused for many people. Nearly 150 individuals embraced this opportunity to find community, connect and ground in ancient teachings of resilience, and support each other.



VIRTUAL SHOWCASES & COMMUNITY EVENTS

Highlight: SAMHSA Grant Award

We are honored to have been selected by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to **implement a five-year Partnership for Success grant**. Our facilitators worked together to curate virtual programming schedules at five partner school sites in this first year of the grant. Programs include Fly By Light chapters, evidence-based interventions for social-emotional literacy and substance use prevention, teacher and educator professional development offerings, as well as parent and family engagement offerings. Through this funding, facilitators also launched a series of monthly **Parenting By Light workshops**, delivered in English and Spanish, focused on various topics to equip parents with SEL skills. Last year's workshops engaged 150 parents on topics covering self-care, mindfulness, holiday gift-giving, and cultural traditions.

Summer Social Justice Zine Workshops

Through a grant from the Comcast NBCUniversal Foundation, facilitators Jair Carrasco and Tyler Grigsby led a multimedia social justice art-focused workshop series and created a digital magazine called "Quarantine YouthMent Consciousness: The Awareware Zine." During these five sessions, young people from our various programs and schools combined drawing, photography, graphic design, creative writing, and poetry into a zine about what it's like to be a young person in 2020.



The poster features a dark background with a colorful, abstract pattern of red, orange, and purple. At the top, the text "Fly By Light" is written in a stylized, colorful font. Below it, the title "Parenting By Light" is prominently displayed in white. The poster lists three workshop dates and topics: Nov 17 (Stressed & Stretched Thin: Mindfulness & Stress Reduction), Dec 15 (Child Please! Money Don't Grow On Trees: Meaningful Holidays, Family & Cultural Traditions), and Jan 26 (Parents Just Don't Understand or DO They? Having Conversations With Your Teens). A yellow circular callout on the right side announces a "GIVEAWAY" of "\$25 Uber Eats gift card raffles in each session". At the bottom, there is a URL and the "ONE COMMON UNITY" logo, which consists of a globe icon and the text "ONE COMMON UNITY". Three circular inset photos show people engaged in activities: a woman hugging a child, a man and woman smiling, and a group of people clapping.

Fly By Light

Parenting By Light

Select Tuesdays 5-6pm for DC Parents
RSVP to madison@onecommunity.org

Nov 17 Stressed & Stretched Thin: Mindfulness & Stress Reduction

Dec 15 Child Please! Money Don't Grow On Trees: Meaningful Holidays, Family & Cultural Traditions

Jan 26 Parents Just Don't Understand or DO They? Having Conversations With Your Teens

<https://tinyurl.com/ParentingByLight>

GIVEAWAY
\$25 Uber Eats
gift card raffles
in each session

 ONE COMMON UNITY

STORY OF IMPACT

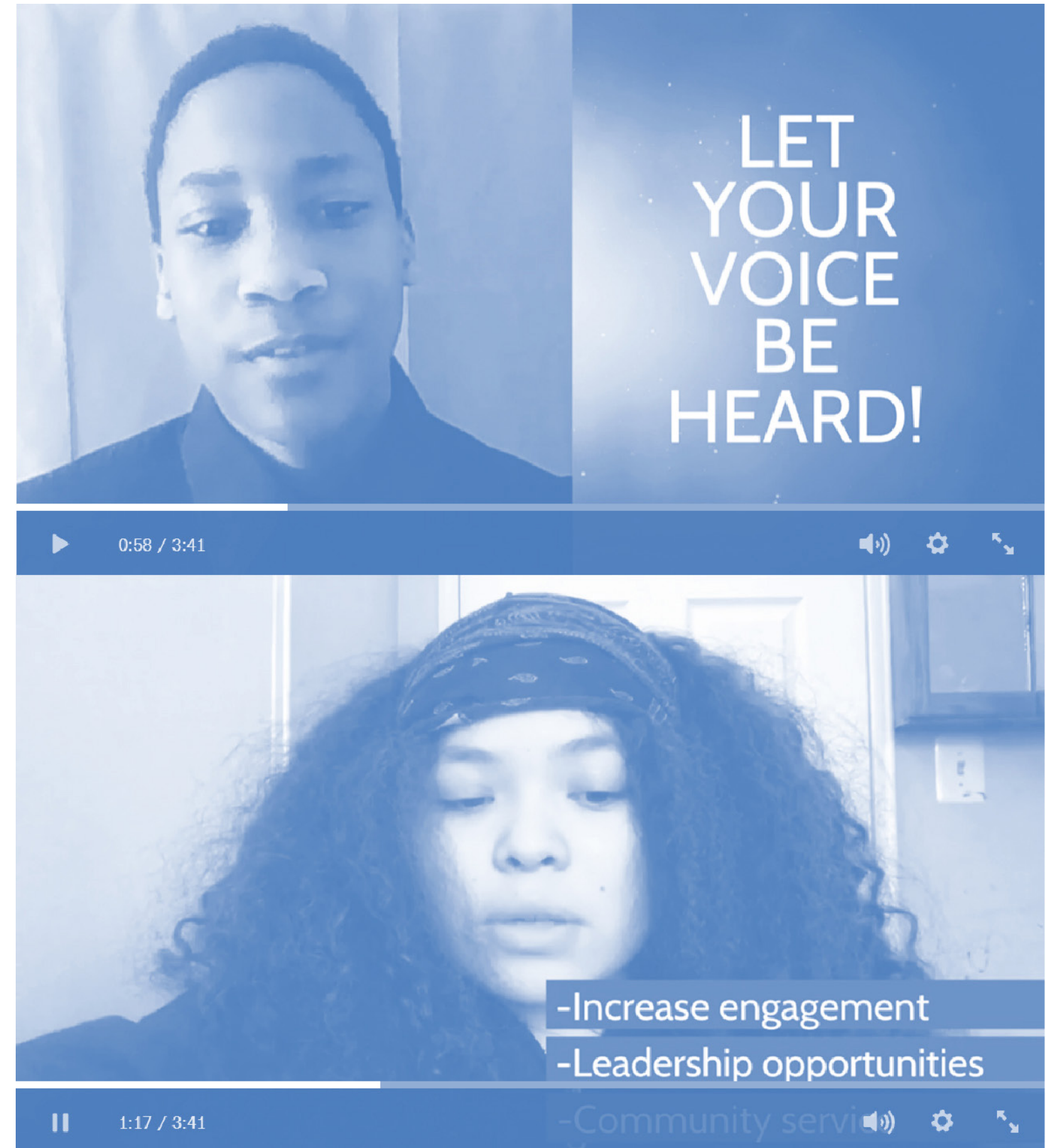
Perry Street Preparatory School - Fly By Light Chapter

At Perry Street Preparatory School, One Common Unity's programming and mental health services teams are fully integrated: teachers are trained in the Fly By Light program model. Students have access to FBL facilitators and an on-site licensed OCU Mental Health Clinician. We have deepened our impact through open and consistent dialogue, aligning with the school and student's needs.

This fully integrated team has proven beneficial, particularly given the unprecedented events this last year. This story of impact is a perfect example of student-led activism in response to the Capitol Insurrection.

There were numerous questions students had after the insurrection. They wanted to understand better how governments work and why they make certain decisions. The teacher, Tiana Thomas, and FBL Facilitator, Tyler Grigsby, worked together to guide students through an exercise to educate students about the Federal and local DC governments, including Perry Street school's governing system.

Students were passionate about the idea of making a change on the local level. They wanted to practice taking action and step up to provide a different, more compassionate leadership approach. So they worked to form the school's first student government.



STORY OF IMPACT

Working diligently for weeks to brainstorm what a student government could look like at their school, students used Fly By Light OST chapter meeting times each week to their mission. Students identified three committees their governing group would focus on:

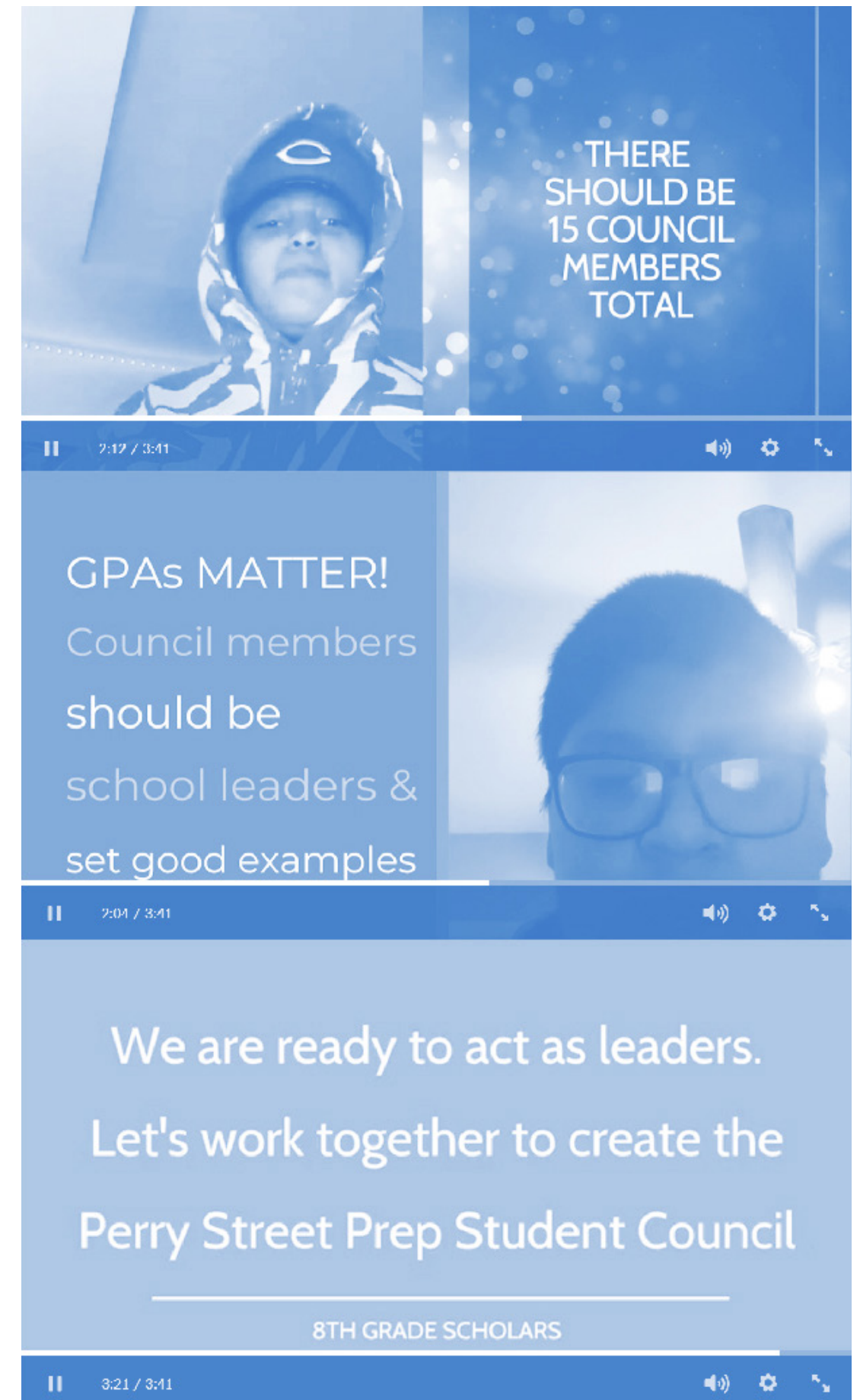
1. **Academic committee:** focused on making academics more engaging and ensuring all students are represented and heard in their classrooms. They also aimed to identify which students struggle in a subject matter and connect them to resources and support to understand the content. They also wanted to advocate for shifts in some content to be more culturally relevant.
2. **Media/Events committee:** focused on producing media, planning events, and family/student engagement.
3. **Social-Emotional Committee:** this committee will focus on social-emotional wellness and peer-led conflict resolution for students throughout the school and serves as an alternative to traditional school discipline methods (such as suspension and expulsion).

Students developed their proposal and presented it through a dynamic pre-recorded film, shared with the school principal and other school administrators. The school administration was supportive of the students' vision and approved their new student-run government.

Over the next several months, students used the Organizing Troupe space to develop themselves as school leaders. They encouraged students in 5th-8th grades to attend weekly meetings, which officially began February 1, 2021.

This project was 100% student-led. Students placed the tools they learned in Organizing Troupe, informed by the FBL social justice pillar, and applied it to a real-life advocacy project at their school.

You can see a snippet of the students' campaign [here](#).





MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Throughout the year, our 14 school-based mental health clinicians delivered critical prevention, early intervention, and mental health treatment services at 14 public and public charter schools across Washington, DC. When schools shifted to distance learning in March, our team quickly rallied to establish teletherapy services through Zoom, ensuring that we could continue providing support to our students during this time. We have also just launched a Community-Wide Mental Health Service, offering holistic therapy to adults and youth throughout Washington, DC.

165 | Total Number of New Patients Enrolled

3,900 | Total Number of Therapeutic Sessions provided

Group Therapy | **379**

Individual Therapy Session | **3,521**

188,220 | Total Hours of Therapeutic Sessions

46 | Total Number of Professional Development/Training sessions offered

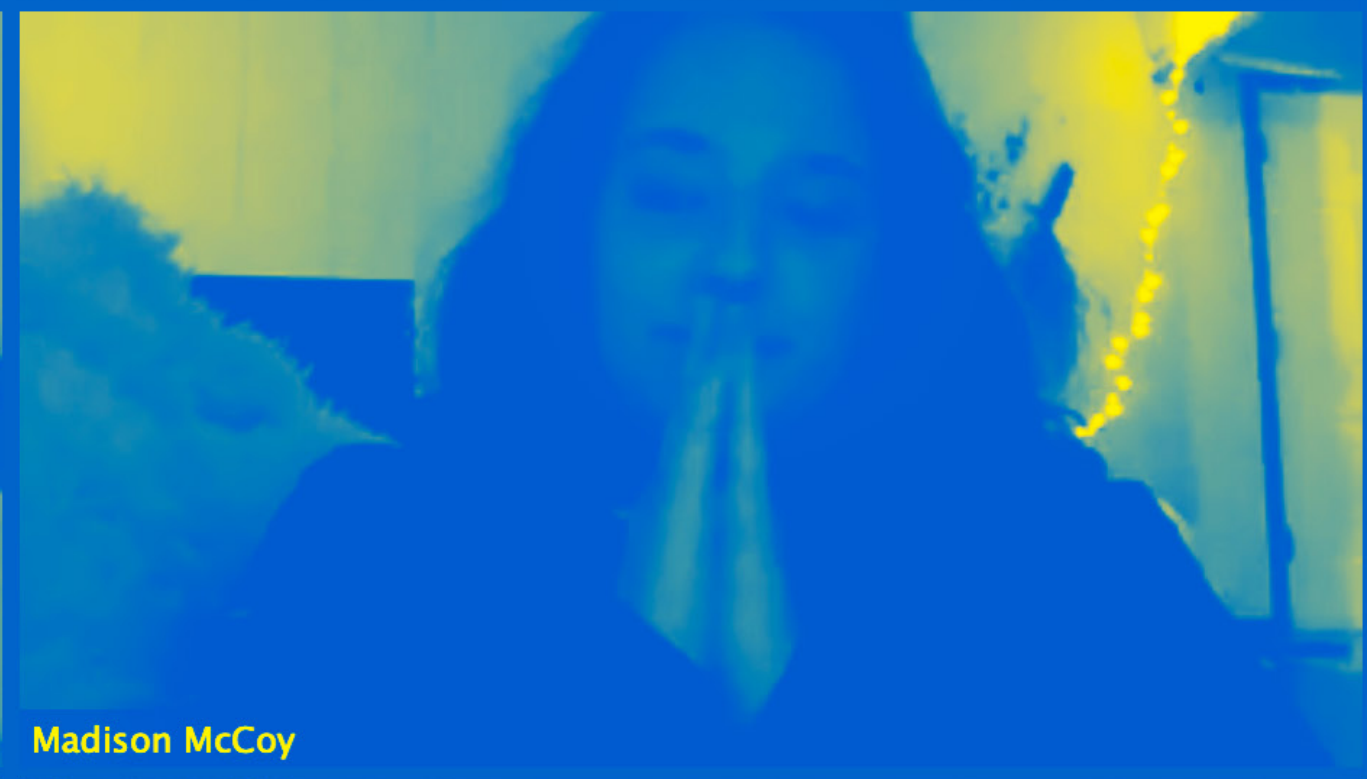
\$0* | Total amount paid by students and their families

***all of our services are provided to students completely free of charge**



Johneé (she/they)

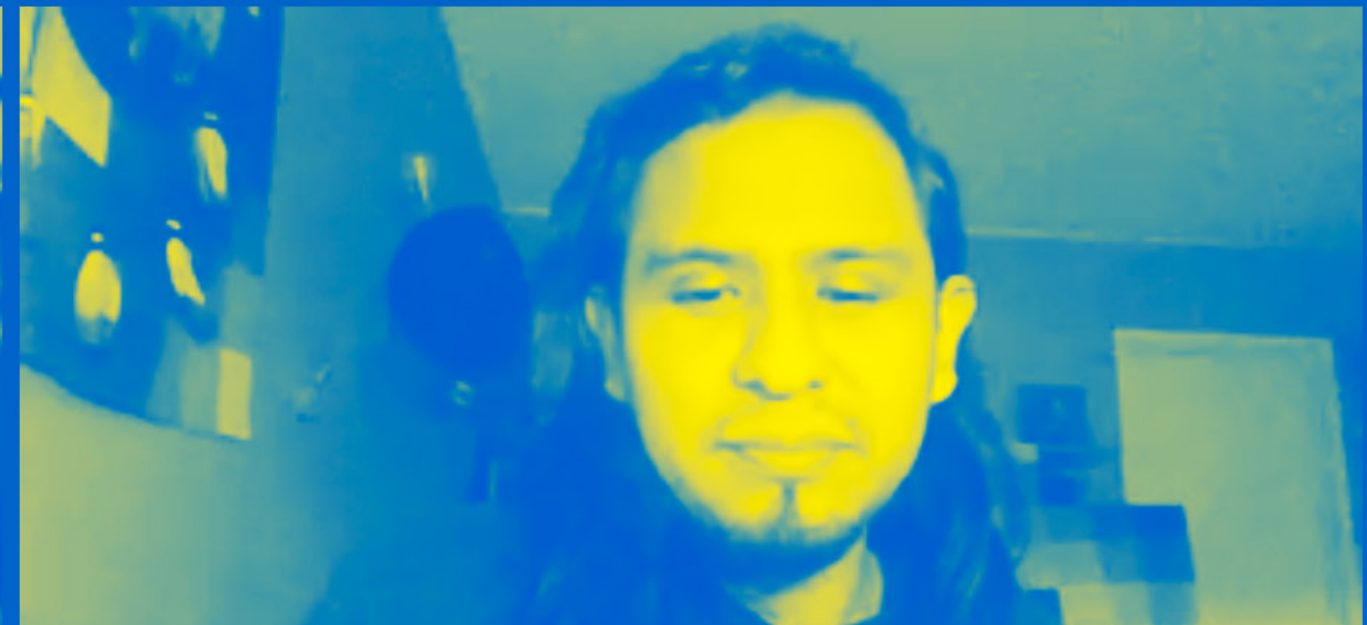
Valeria Bemby (she/her)



Madison McCoy



Shaden Dowiatt



TRAINING

TRAINING

FBL National Training: 22 educators, teachers, youth workers, community organizers, artists, and activists worldwide joined our first virtual Fly By Light National Training! The 40-hour training in our award-winning program model includes after-school and in-school workshops, overnight nature immersion retreats, annual city-wide showcases, professional development for teachers, parents, and other school administrators, and youth-led social justice campaigns. This new initiative allowed us to train and certify each participant to lead Fly By Light chapters and implement the FBL Curriculum in their communities. We are excited to expand our movement both nationally and globally.

Roosevelt Professional Development Series: Facilitators worked closely with the administration at Roosevelt High School to plan and provide SEL-focused professional development opportunities, reaching an average of 110 staff members at each session. The training included a three-session cultural humility workshop followed by a two-session workshop to develop strategies that better support LGBTQ youth.





ONE COMMON UNITY STAFF

ONE COMMON UNITY STAFF

The pandemic emerged as a health emergency in early March and lingered longer than anyone anticipated. As schools across the state were mandated to close, instruction abruptly shifted from in-person to remote. We were forced to adapt education and therapies for our diverse learners to a fully online format with little time for planning or preparation. As the initial weeklong quarantine stretched into months, our talented leadership team and staff provided exceptional support to our students, families, and partner schools. Every member of OCU's staff contributed, adapting with relentless determination and courage to every new challenge. They were amazing!





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BOARD OF DIRECTORS | 2020-2021



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THANK YOU



LOOKING AHEAD

LOOKING AHEAD

OCU's programs are proven to play a vital role in children and youth's social and emotional development. This matters more now than ever before. The isolation, exposure to adverse childhood experiences, and the loss of opportunity our young people face right now cannot be overstated. Looking forward, providing safe places for youth to connect with each other and caring adult mentors and process what happened this year will be critically important. We are deeply committed to our community and well-prepared to provide these vital safe spaces for our youth.

In response to the national mental health crisis, which the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated, we are launching new Community-Based Mental Health Services, emphasizing youth and adults in the DC area experiencing anxiety, depression, grief, and trauma. This outpatient service complements our existing school-based mental health services.

With passion, purpose, and a commitment to DC's youth, we will continue to equip students with the skills they need to succeed in school, stay in school, cope with adversity, and thrive in life. We'll do this together!





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