Aspire
Bringing Creativity and Education to Justice-Involved Youth
Problem Statement

The high recidivism* rate of justice-involved youth is, in part, due to the system’s lack of providing socially-acceptable coping and expressive outlets for them while they are incarcerated.

*Recidivism is the tendency of a convicted criminal to re-offend
Who are Justice-Involved Youth?

They used to be called “juvenile delinquents.”* The new term is “justice-involved youth,” a non-disparaging, government-speak phrase to signify that young people with criminal convictions can become productive citizens.

*A juvenile delinquent is a young person who habitually commits criminal acts or offenses.
48,000 youth, on any given day in the United States, are confined in facilities away from home as a result of criminal-justice involvement.

*Every person represents 1,000 justice-involved youth.*

Quote from: https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/youth2019.html
Justice-involved youth statistics for 2019 in the United States of America

- Detention Centers: 16,858
- Long-term Secure Facilities: 10,777
- Adult Prisons and Jails: 4,535
- Residential Treatment: 10,256
- Group Homes: 3,375
- Reception/Diagnostic Centers: 555
- Ranch/Wilderness Camps: 862
- Shelters: 746
- Bootcamps: 151
- Indian Country: 136

Chart from: https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/youth2019.html
Reasons for Recidivism

Individual and Family
- Poverty Level
- Access to health and welfare resources
- Dynamics of the house (single parent)
- Incarcerated parents
- Home discipline
- Education level
- Mental Health
- Previous Justice System Exposure

Relationships and Peers
- Peer pressure/delinquent peers
- Gang related violence
- Role models, mentors, advisor influence
- Drug exposure
- Risky sexual activity
- Peer advocacy

Society and Policy
- Community advocacy
- Lack of cultural awareness
- Racial profiling of bias treatment
- Number of expungements for juveniles
- Diversion options
- Prosecutorial discretions

Community
- Performance of schools
- Neighborhood characteristics
- Density/Crime rate
- Geographic disparities
- School programs and community-based initiatives

Table from: http://cfs.cbc.usf.edu/projects-research/_docs/BlackYouthInvolvementTANTemplate.pdf
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Education is Important

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, “Youth in detention centers, in particular, report receiving the fewest education services, such as special education, GED preparation, and job training.”

“Helping youth acquire educational skills is also one of the most effective approaches to the prevention of delinquency and the reduction of recidivism... Higher levels of literacy are associated with lower rates of juvenile delinquency, re-arrest, and recidivism.”

https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/youth2019.html
And so are Coping Strategies

In addition to educational opportunities, justice-involved youth need easy access to psychological therapies and creative outlets to aid in professional and social skills. Such coping mechanisms will help them to become more productive and engaged citizens.

“"I read a book one day and my whole life was changed.""
“Arts-based healing programs can help youth process trauma, improve coping skills and build resiliency and positive emotions.”
Aspire is an organization that trains college-age volunteers to educate and assist justice-involved youth in the visual arts in order to: 1) provide educational opportunities during incarceration; 2) instruct youth on how to use artistic outlets as coping mechanisms; and 3) teach skills that can potentially lead to job placement or further education.

Thesis
There are many non-profits and organizations nationwide that aid in preventative programs for at-risk youth, and re-entry programs for youth after incarceration.

We also need programs that work with youth while they are incarcerated.
Aspire is doing just that!

Aspire seeks to bring art education into the Juvenile Detention Centers themselves, to meet youth where they are contending with the very problems that brought them there.

But, we are not doing it alone...
Potential Aspire Partners

Art Forward
Cleveland, OH.
“Is a Juvenile Court Volunteer Services sponsored program designed to connect Case Western Reserve University students with residents at the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Detention Center via monthly art projects.”

Artistic Noise
Boston, MA.
“To bring the freedom and power of artistic practice to young people who are incarcerated, on probation, or otherwise involved in the justice system.”

Big Thought: Artivism
Dallas, TX.
“Big Thought designs, curates, and delivers HIGH IMPACT PROGRAMS that are built upon hands-on experiential learning. Because we understand the challenges youth in marginalized communities face, we embrace trauma-informed methodology.”

Artivism...
“Artivism empowers teens to curate and create visual and performance art consisting of multi-media art forms such as acrylic, charcoal, photography, videography and spoken word to advance social justice issues.”
Such partnerships are a great start!

But, more programs are still needed that work directly with youth who are locked behind bars or in facilities.
I want to create a non-profit that is different from the ones I have communicated with and researched.

What will make mine different?

College students will learn about justice-involved youth and bring arts education directly into the juvenile detention centers as part of their education.
Why is Aspire being structured in this way?

To be mutually beneficial for both the college-age volunteers and the justice-involved youth.
The four key areas that lead to success in working with justice-involved youth.
Arts = Engagement

“Participating in the arts can have positive academic and personal effects for students. Arts engagement can help support present and future outcomes and success for youths, including increased civic engagement, pursuit of high school graduation and interest in college enrollment.”
Solution

Our goal is to bring creative outlets to justice-involved youth to aid in the reduction of recidivism. With these creative outlets and skill sets, justice-involved youth will be able to trade the previous bad behaviors for new, better, and less risky ones.

We are also building awareness in the community, especially on college campuses for the need of programs like Aspire.
Website

https://srmorrison2.wixsite.com/aspireprogram
Stakeholders

Primary
- Colleges/Institutes
- Justice-Involved Youth
- Social Workers
- Parents and/or Legal Guardians of justice-involved youth

Secondary
- Art Programs
- Donors
- Juvenile Courts
- Teachers
- Therapists

Tertiary
- Artists
- Charities
- Communities