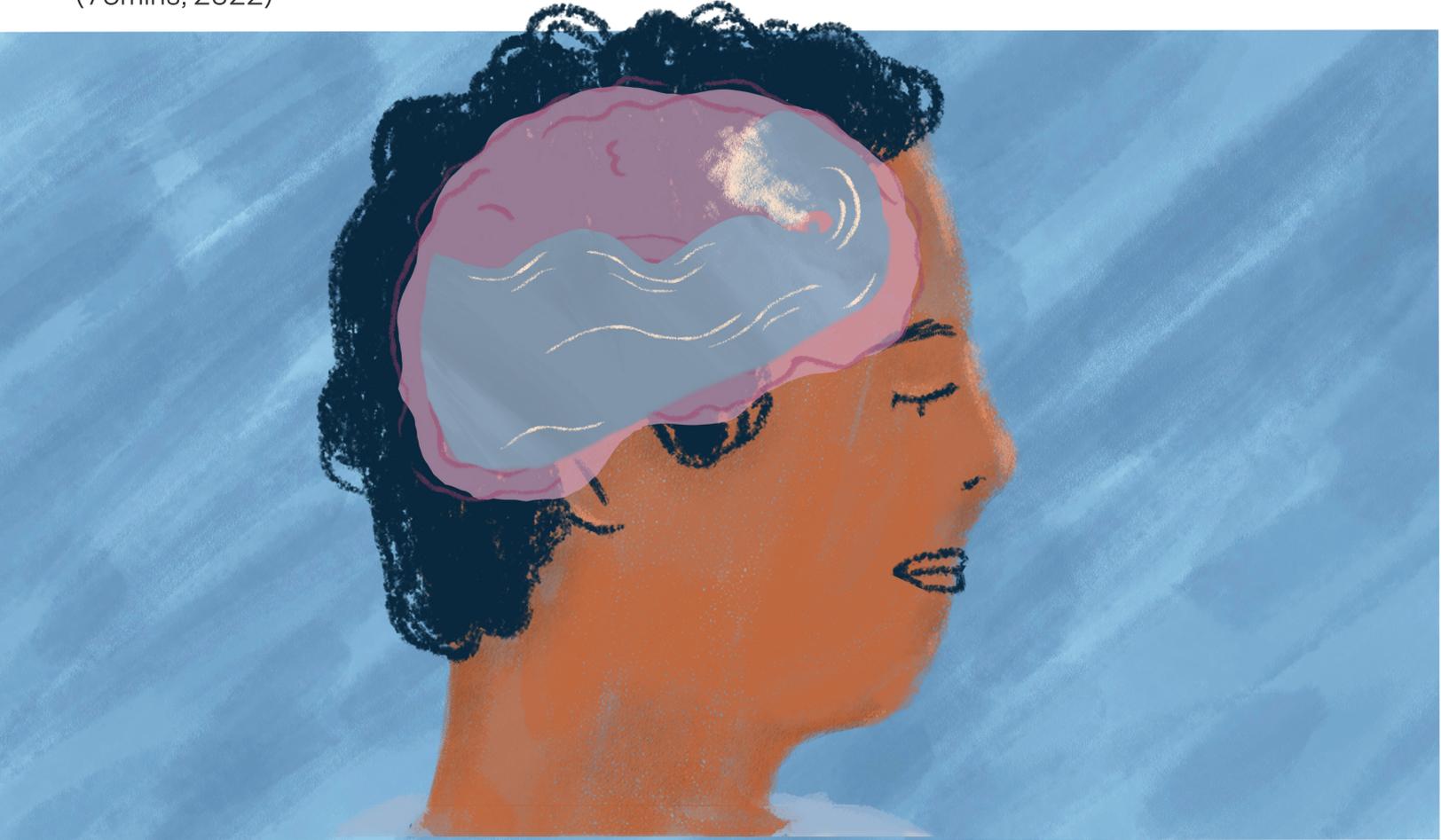


PRODUCED BY PHILLYCAM

“Divided Attention” follows four students from Toby Farms, a public middle school in the historically underfunded Chester Upland School District, as they learn and practice mindfulness amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the school to prison pipeline, and threat of charter takeover.

(73mins, 2022)



DIVIDED ATTENTION

When the children who need the most,
receive the least

Directed by Stephanie Ramones

DIVIDED ATTENTION

When the children who need the most, receive the least



Trailer:

https://vimeo.com/688690741/e35f4ecd76?embedded=true&source=video_title&owner=17483154

PARTNERS

The Education Advocacy Program at **Delaware County Advocacy and Resource Organization** (DCARO) organizes a Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council (PADDC) project aimed at combating the School-to-Prison Pipeline. The program serves the Chester-Upland School district by providing teacher and student training in research proven techniques (Mindfulness and Collaborative and Proactive Solutions) to develop emotional and behavioral regulation skills with the goal of ameliorating punitive practices.

<https://www.delcoadvocacy.org/>

PhillyCAM is a noncommercial community media organization in Philadelphia that provides transformative opportunities for people and communities to express themselves, to learn from each other, and to produce and share media reflective of the experiences of everyday people. Throughout the film, PhillyCAM supported in training a few mindfulness students so they could document their journey and reflections at home.

www.phillycam.org



THE OBJECTIVE

“Divided Attention” is meant to serve as a call-to-action to address inequitable school funding for varied audiences such as students, parents and community members. The film also serves to model how mindfulness skills instruction could be implemented in schools to impact students' social emotional wellbeing and potentially replace punitive practices.

The film can support and spark dialogue on the following topics:

- Mindfulness in education
- Social emotional learning
- School to Prison Pipeline
- Fair funding
- Systemic/structural racism among historically disadvantaged communities

SYNOPSIS

The story picks up in March of 2021 half way through the school year as students begin to return to a hybrid model of virtual and in-person learning for the first time since the virtual learning was enforced nationwide due to COVID-19 pandemic. The audience is introduced to the ESEL mindfulness program in Toby Farms middle school--the only public middle school in Chester Upland School District, a low income school district under receivership on the brink of becoming a district consisting of only charter schools. Virtual learning is tough on students and teachers alike. Home environments are not always suitable for learning and it can be especially challenging for students who may have unstable or strenuous home lives, further limiting their access to mindfulness instruction while the disparity and stressors from those same challenges build.

There are more to the obstacles the community faces as a whole stemming from a distinct lack of funding for education in Chester Upland when compared to neighboring districts. CUSD simply does not receive the targeted funding it needs to serve the children in its schools, and has been dealing with this level of disparity for decades since the era of segregation--creating lasting effects that are felt by the people of Chester to this day.

With everything the student body is up against in this community, mindfulness techniques are shown to help children recognize strategies to deal with trauma that has impacted them and find positive outlets. In overcrowded classrooms and understaffed institutions which can't appropriately address the needs of students, the film suggests educators are more likely to use disciplinary measures thereby diverting children to a juvenile justice system and subsequently a criminal adult system.

"Disproportionately, this impacts Black and Brown children"

- Maura McInerney, Legal Director for The Education Law Center

It is explained that the school to prison pipeline starts as early as pre-school. Students are six times more likely to be suspended if you are Black than if you are White, and that figure is doubled if the student has a disability. The situation in Chester comes to a head in the summer of 2021 as the CUSD Receiver, Juan Baughn, is proposing privatization of nearly the rest of the entire district in order to secure funding; there is very little community support for the district's proposal. Teachers, parents, and advocates rally together to oppose the proposal for charterization, leading to its rejection.

However, stories like this are cyclical, and the situation in Chester-Upland is far from resolved. Teachers the film documented were not able to continue working under these circumstances, and left. With so few places to turn, there has never been a greater need for programs that allow students to learn techniques which help them manage their trauma, and lead healthy and proactive futures.

THE TEAM



Stephanie Ramones Director/Editor

Stephanie is a Philadelphia-based Venezuelan American filmmaker and photographer committed to using media to create a more kind, just, and equitable world. Stephanie's film subjects have ranged from Latin Dance, urban youth sports, domestic violence, social justice, and gender and racial inequities in medicine and education. Stephanie holds a Master's degree in Positive Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania and a Bachelor's in Psychology and Philosophy from Boston University.

Nicole Mendez Executive Producer

Nicole is a neurodivergent, passionate, Education Advocate whose lived experiences and experience as a parent to a son with special education needs drives her vision of helping to create a fully inclusive and equitable society. She believes strongly in the right to a quality education assuring success and maximizing the potential for every student. Nicole holds a Bachelor's of Science, is a founding member of the PA Inclusion Collective, and a COPAA member. She also coordinates the PADDCC grant aimed at combatting the school to prison pipeline.



Laura Deutch Producer

Laura Deutch is a Philadelphia-based artist, educator, and cultural organizer committed to using media as a tool for social justice, creative expression and community building. Currently, as the Education Director at PhillyCAM, she oversees monthly community news programs, client productions and training programs. Working closely with nonprofit, community and city partners, she uses media on all of its platforms to inform, empower and connect residents of Philadelphia.



Sergio Galeano

Producer

With more than a decade of industry experience and his entire professional career spent in non-commercial media, Sergio is compelled to bring stories to life for the impact they have on the world around us. He is a graduate of Drexel University's Television Production & Media Management program.

Ariel Taylor

Producer

Focused on video production, editing, producing, graphic design, and even social media, Ariel has years of experience wearing multiple hats. Working as a Youth Media Coordinator and leading a Youth Media program for the better half of a decade equipped her with the perfect skillset for this project.



Aidan Un

Director of Photography

Aidan Un is a French-Korean-American filmmaker based in West Philadelphia. Making images is a way for him to consider questions of culture, place, and identity.

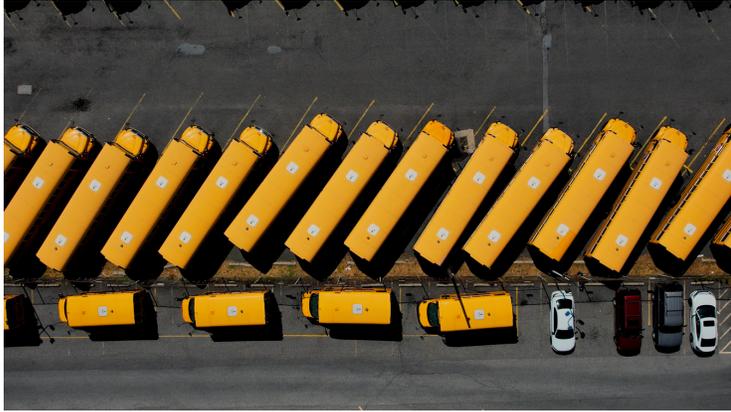
His first feature documentary, "The Ancestors Live: 50 Years of Kùlú Mèlé African Drum & Dance Company" featured at BlackStar Film Festival 2020.

Ryan Doherty

Assistant Editor

Ryan is a graduate of Drexel University's Film and Television program with a focus on constructing puzzles out of the media in front of him





CREDITS

Director
Stephanie Ramones

Executive Producer
Nicole Mendez

Producers
Laura Deutch
Sergio Galeano
Ariel Taylor
Gretjen Clausing

Director of Photography
Aidan Un

Editor
Stephanie Ramones

Assistant Editor
Ryan Doherty

Additional Editing by
Liz Canning

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Rafael
Crystal
Nathan

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Max Grudzinski

Production Assistant
Edward Washington

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Cybee Bloss
Pace Ford

Sound Editor
Jeff Paulukinas

Colorist
Roland Boyden

Learning consultant
Stacey Mandel

Motion Graphics
Ryan Doherty
Sergio Galeano

Featuring
(in order of appearance)

Nicole Cogdell
LaMonte Popley
Stacey Mandel
Tamia
Theresa Ebersole
Nicole Mendez
Rafael
Crystal
Nathan
Sade
Johnathan Rahim King
A. Jean Arnold
Maura McInerney
Carol Kazeem
Kristie Barnes
Melanie
Dr. Juan R Baughn
Dr. Birks

Archival Images
Delaware County Historical Society

Music Licensed from
APM Music

Music Supervisors
Sergio Galeano
Stephanie Ramones

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Kandice L. Lewis
Jean-Pierre Brice
PhillyCAM Staff

CMP Radio
MJ Freed Theatre
Toby Farms Middle School
Chester Upland School District

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Delaware County
Advocacy & Resource
Organization

Produced by



"Beautifully illustrates the power of mindfulness-based SEL for healing trauma and supporting well-being in schools. It follows four students and their mindfulness teacher during the pandemic as well as the journey of their underfunded public school as it tries mightily to not be turned into a charter school. Their story, and the voices telling it, moved my heart. I came away more clearly understanding educational inequities and inspired by the positive impacts that caring, dedicated educators and school leaders can make in a community."

- Tracy Heilers
Founder and Executive Director,
Coalition of Schools Educating Mindfully



OUTREACH

Hashtags:

#fairfunding #phillycam #dividedattention #mindfulness

Related Accounts:

@phillycam

Website:

www.phillycam.org/dividedattention

Additional press stills:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1atXB4hw9gaaJ_sKJp4GZAurUbVA5Eub-?usp=sharing