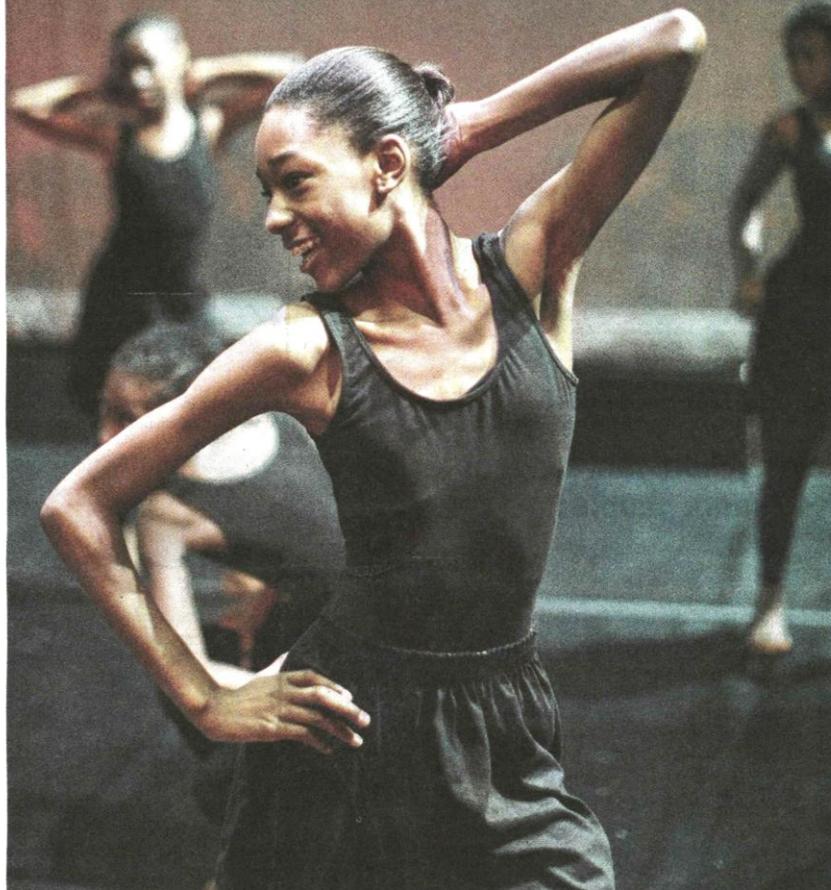


With help from famed dance program,
one hundred youths learn steps of
POISE & PRIDE



JOHN O'BOYLE/THE STAR-LEDGER

Simaya Womack participates in a jazz dance class during AileyCamp at Arts High School in Newark yesterday. The Alvin Ailey program is held in cities across the country, but is being offered in Newark for the first time.

Alvin Ailey camp teaches confidence, creativity

By Peggy McGlone
STAR-LEGER STAFF

Dance teacher Wayne Williams stood at the lip of the Newark Arts High stage, his back to the two dozen black-clad students lined up behind him. "Where are your hands?" he asked over his shoulder. "Out" they shouted.

"Chin?" he called.
"Up," they said.
"Stomach?"
"In," they replied, a few giggles disrupting their perfect unison.

Williams and his students were finishing a modern dance class yesterday morning during the first week of AileyCamp, a national summer arts program being offered in Newark for the first time.

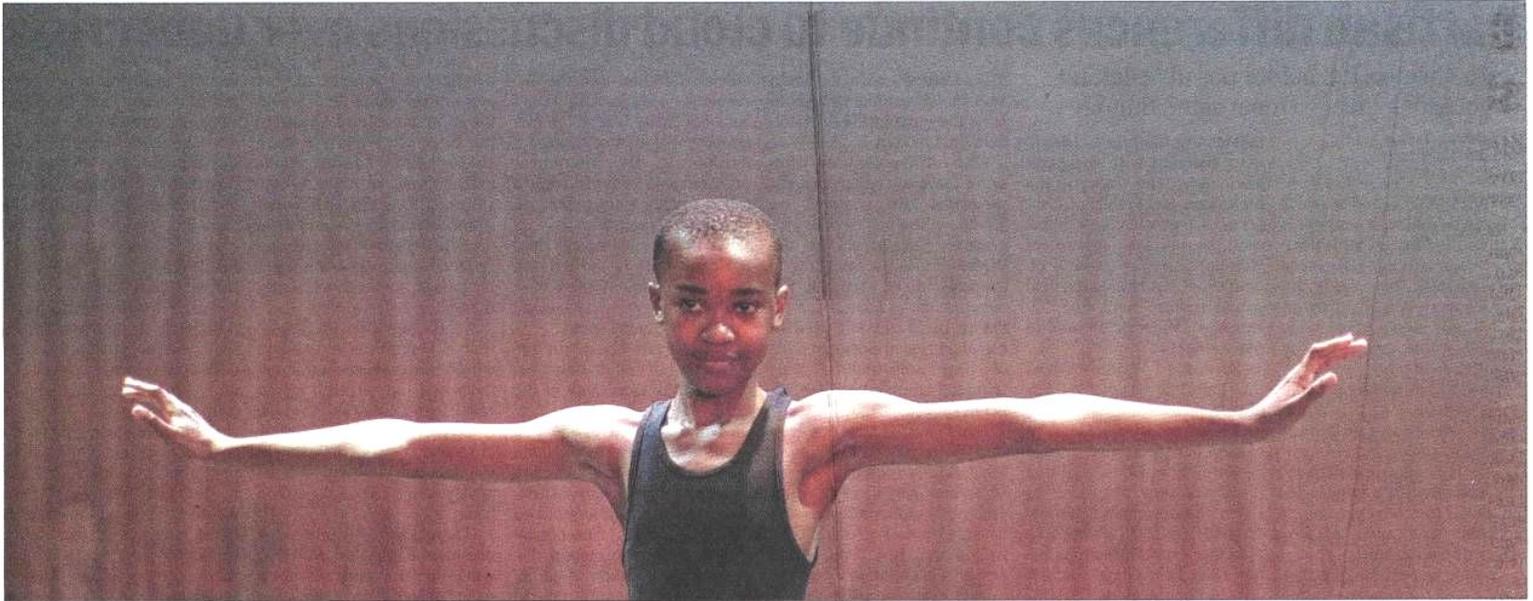
The camp, created by the famed Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, gives 100 of the city's 11- to 14-year-olds the chance to use dance to spark

their creativity, build self-esteem and prepare for life.

"We're giving them confidence, new information, insight into who they are creatively, socially and physically," AileyCamp national director Nasha Thomas-Schmitt said. "Who am I and is this who I want to be?"

Newark is the 10th city for the AileyCamp program, which first launched in Kansas City, Mo., in 1989. Other host cities are Atlanta; Berkeley, Calif.; Boston; Chicago; Miami; Bridgeport, Conn.;

SEE AILEY, PAGE 4



PHOTOS BY JOHN O'BOYLE/THE STAR-LEDGER

Kamauri Davis practices in a jazz dance class during AileyCamp at Arts High School in Newark. Participants are provided with leotards, ballet shoes, shirts, backpacks and water bottles.

Ailey

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

New York City, and Kansas City, Kan.

More than 200 students applied for the 100 slots in the Newark program, which is free and presented in collaboration with Newark Public Schools and the New Jersey Performing Arts Center. The campers were chosen for their enthusiasm and interest, not their dancing abilities.

Shaeed Greene, 11, is one of 16 boys participating in the six-week program. He said he wanted to have fun this summer.

"I didn't want to stay home and watch TV," Shaeed said, adding that he wants to be a dancer someday. "I hope my kids can see me on TV."

Alvin Ailey has a relationship with each of the 10 cities that includes performances and community programs. The professional dance company performs at NJPAC each spring, and provides in-school programs for Newark students. The summer camp extends and strengthens these ties, Thomas-Schmitt said.

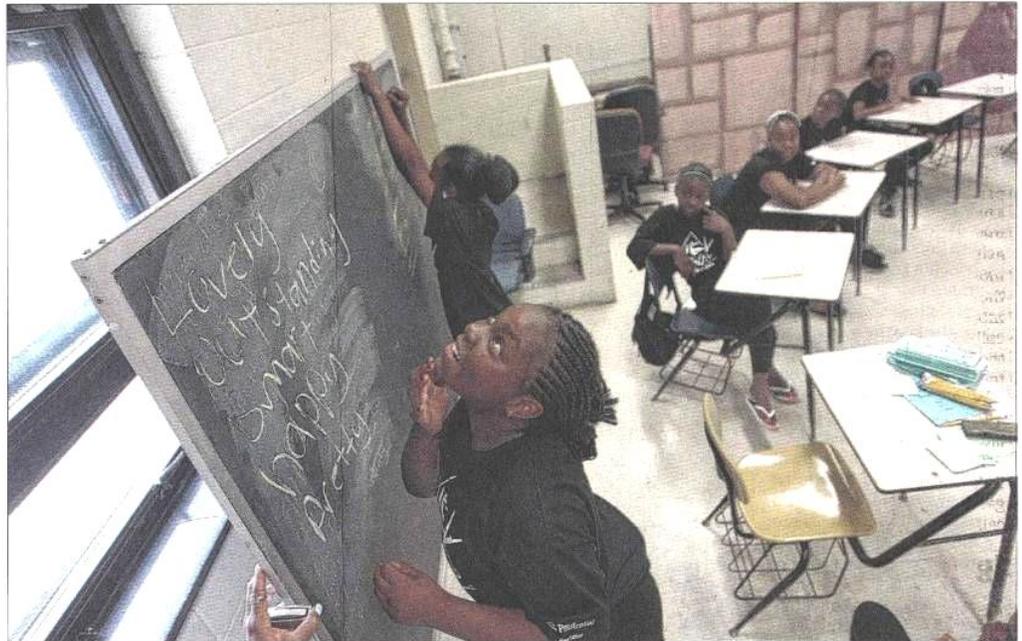
The campers arrive at Arts High each morning at 8:30 and

take ballet, modern, jazz and West African dance classes, and an African drumming class. They also take creative communications, a blend of poetry, writing and visual art, and a class called personal development that focuses on drug prevention, nutrition, conflict resolution, self-esteem and sexual responsibility.

This class is critical, Thomas-Schmitt says, because it allows the students to explore issues in a safe and supportive environment.

"How do I resolve conflict? How do I deal with peer pressure? What is self-esteem? I don't like the way I look," she said, listing the questions and conversations. "We give them a platform to have a voice."

The program is highly disciplined. Campers sign contracts agreeing to many rules, including attending every day, being on time, actively participating, being respectful and having a positive attitude. No swearing, gum-chewing, cell phones or music players are allowed. "You get to make new friends, and the people are really nice, and very welcoming," said 13-year-old Beverly Colon, who describes herself as a beginner dancer. "I'm very



Auri Clark tries to think of more words with positive meanings during a personal-development class at AileyCamp.

excited to perform at NJPAC. I've never performed before."

The camp provides leotards, T-shirts, shorts, ballet shoes, a backpack and water bottle.

Campers are served breakfast, lunch and a snack each day. The schedule includes field trips — roller skating and bowling are two planned

outings — and culminates with a performance Aug. 10 in NJPAC's Victoria Theater.

AileyCamp Newark is supported by a \$175,000 grant from the Prudential Foundation and in-kind services from the city's public schools.

Prudential vice president Shané Harris said the arts camp reinforces a host of positive behaviors.

"It's a lot more than dance," Harris said. "It's an opportunity to expose young people to the arts, which helps to build creativity, and it reinforces academic achievement and critical-thinking skills."

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