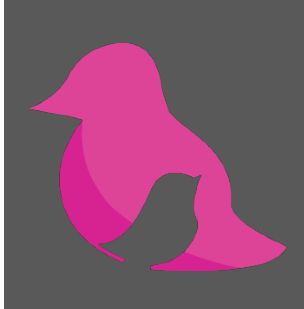


# The Alex House Project Goes Virtual

## ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

*March-September 2020*



### Our Mission

The Alex House Project (AHP) is a peer-led, social service support and leadership development organization for young expecting and parenting mothers and young fathers living in New York City. AHP works to increase long-term family-sufficiency and independence by providing parenting classes and leadership development in a safe and nurturing environment.



Analysis & Report  
by SEED Impact

## AHP Response to COVID-19

Beginning March 1, 2020, when the first New York City case of COVID-19 was discovered, the virus grew exponentially. By March 25, over 17,800 New York City cases had been confirmed, with 199 deaths. The city's infection rate was five times higher than the rest of the country, totaling one-third of confirmed US cases.

Beginning April 28, Alex House launched its first virtual Open House event. Over two days, young parents were offered a chance to meet our staff, share concerns and questions, and enroll in our parent training, which commenced May 12. The moms really enjoyed the opportunity to connect via Zoom, as one explained:

*“I'm tired of being inside but I am happy this happened because now I get to attend classes.”*

By virtue of being online, the 8-week parent training program was able to reach moms outside of New York City. Two joined from out of state, having learned of the opportunity from friends.

On June 19, the first virtual class finished their 8-week cycle. Eleven moms completed the class, in spite of challenges for some with the Zoom connection. Our facilitators discovered innovative ways to keep everyone involved and active. A safe space was created; moms shared life stories that they had not shared with anyone else. The closing ceremony brought laughter and tears. The moms exchanged contact information and committed to remain connected both to AHP and each other.

On June 22, the summer class was launched. Based on the logistical and retention challenges encountered with the 8-week virtual program, the summer program was reconfigured as a two-week intensive. We found that participants encountered less disruptions with eight consecutive sessions.

*“As a participant and then parent educator since 2013, I truly enjoyed facilitating the virtual class and learning new ways to keep everyone engaged. I love the possibilities the organization provides.”*

Keesha, age 26



*"My guidance counselor at school referred me, but I was not going to come as I live far from Red Hook. When I received the call saying classes were going to be online, I almost jumped out my skin, I was so happy. Thank you for putting them online and making Alex House accessible to people who live far away."*

Tanessa, age 17



Throughout the pandemic, Alex House never stopped caring and reaching out to New York City parents. On May 27th, in collaboration with Food Nation and Grandma's Hands, Alex House hosted a Grab & Go event on Staten Island. We distributed pampers, wipes and other essentials to 100 families, supplies they were having a hard time buying due to reduced work hours and layoffs.

On June 27th, a sunny Saturday morning, we set up a table at 9th Street in Red Hook and gave away pampers and wipes to over 100 local parents. The need was so tremendous that we had to shop for more supplies.

Several times during the morning, we heard parents express this sentiment:

*“No one ever thinks about how hard it is to buy pampers when you don't even have money to buy dinner.”*

On July 25th, we hosted an afternoon pamper and wipes giveaway. We were able to serve 150 families. Some of the same people from June showed up and were so grateful that we were giving out pampers again. It was a great day.

The pandemic has caused a lot of despair and loss in our communities. Our grab and go events were able to provide people with faith in others and hope for a better tomorrow.

*"Wow thank you for this give-away, I never even knew about AHP. I will definitely be telling people about your program and how you were out here helping the community."*

On August 22nd, Alex House set up a table for children from the community to receive back-to-school backpacks (filled with notebook, pencils, paper, folders, crayons, erasers, hand sanitizers and a mask). Little gifts were also given to children who came to the table for a backpack. Sadly, due to the rain, only 25 backpacks and other gifts were distributed. Another day was scheduled, and we reached 75 more children before the start of school.

The pandemic has been hard on the young moms we serve, as well as moms that did not fit our age criteria. Fifteen moms, ages 26 and older, reached out to Alex House wanting to join our virtual classes. These moms expressed a need to talk to others sharing similar daily parenting challenges.

The sessions attended by a mix of older with younger moms went especially well. Everyone was shocked to discover such common challenges among older moms and those young enough to be their daughter. The older moms were instrumental in allowing the younger moms a glimpse into what lies ahead and how having a child need not mean you stop dreaming big. These sessions with the older moms resulted in some great friendships and opened the door to support systems that neither group of moms expected. Being able to provide this safe space for human connection meant a lot to our team of parent providers, as well:

*"This pandemic has left us all feeling vulnerable and alone. We are happy and proud that we have been able to provide a safe place for moms of all ages in their time of need."*





## 2020 Virtual Outcome Performance

*Eleven women completed the Spring 2020, 8-week virtual training.*

*Three women completed the eight-session intensive Summer 2020 class.*

### DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE 14 GRADUATES

LOCATION	AVERAGE AGE: 22	NUMBER CHILDREN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Brooklyn: 11</li><li>• Bronx: 1</li><li>• Staten Island: 1</li><li>• Virginia: 1</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Under 20: 4</li><li>• 21-25: 8</li><li>• Over 25: 2</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 11 Parents: 1 child</li><li>• 2 parents: expecting 1<sup>st</sup> child</li><li>• 1 parent: 2 children</li></ul>

### ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS

- 6 women unable to attend classes received personal or child advice, support, or referrals
- 2 older women from out of the city participated informally in some sessions

*“I loved being at AHP. No one judged me and they supported me in coming out of my shell. I truly liked being around everyone and all the love and support they offered. I have learned so much in the past 8 weeks. I feel like a parenting expert now!”*  
- Ariel, age 22

*“Thank you AHP. I am happy you found a way to offer classes while still keeping everyone safe! I have never attended a class like this. It was FUN and I have learned so much from the leaders and my fellow participants.”*  
- Carmen, age 20

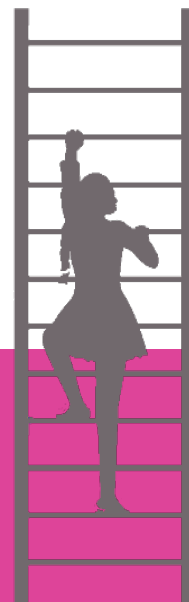
*“When I signed on, I was feeling really tired, but our instructor had so much energy you could feel it coming through the computer. Her energy lifted me up, and I got excited and was wide awake. It was nice to see that she was enjoying teaching us. She did everything she could to keep us feeling like she was right in the room with us.”*  
-Jeanne, age 19

# Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

The Social Emotional Learning of participants is charted using SEED Impact's Competency Ladders™. The Alex House leadership worked closely with SEED to customize the stages of development, with intent to assess and accelerate growth in Social Emotional Learning (SEL), a critical dimension of youth and adult development.<sup>1</sup>

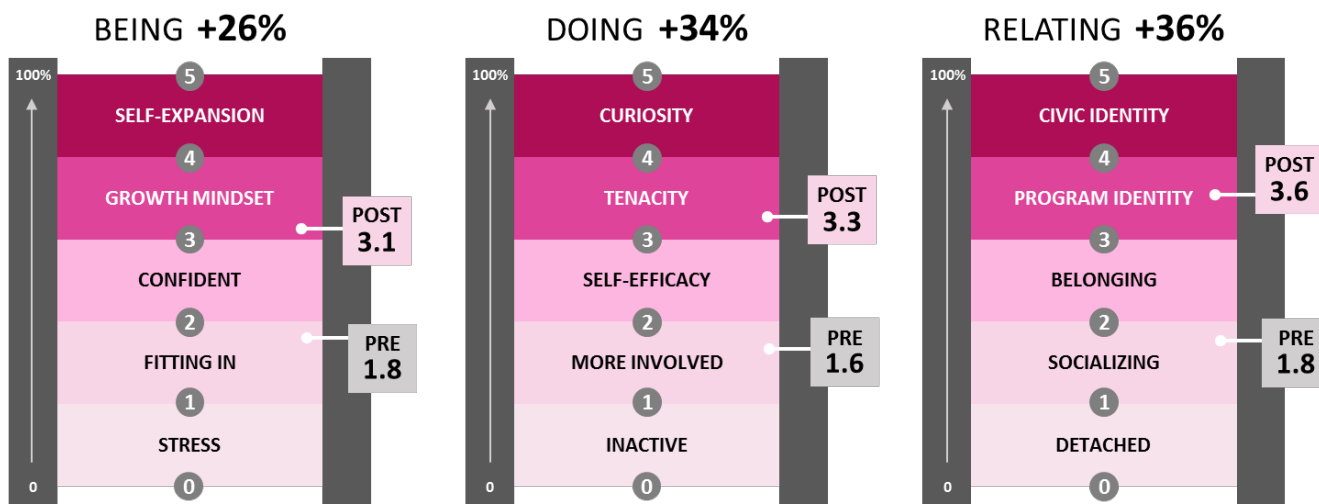
Each ladder defines **five stages of competence**, from adjusting through thriving.

1. The **BEING** Ladder tracks emotional competencies
2. The **DOING** Ladder tracks cognitive skills
3. The **RELATING** Ladder tracks social and interpersonal skills



## ALEX HOUSE SEL

The 14 moms who completed the parenting training were assessed twice by staff, pre and post engagement. On average across all three competency ladders, participants achieved an average gain of **32 percent in SEL development**.



The average change in SEL score went from 1.7 to 3.3, pre to post. Results were similar for both the 8-week spring class and two-week intensive summer training.

<sup>1</sup> Across the field, SEL has been challenging to measure without lengthy surveys that yield questionable results. [Learn more](#) about SEED Impact's approach as a supplement or alternative to standardized surveys.

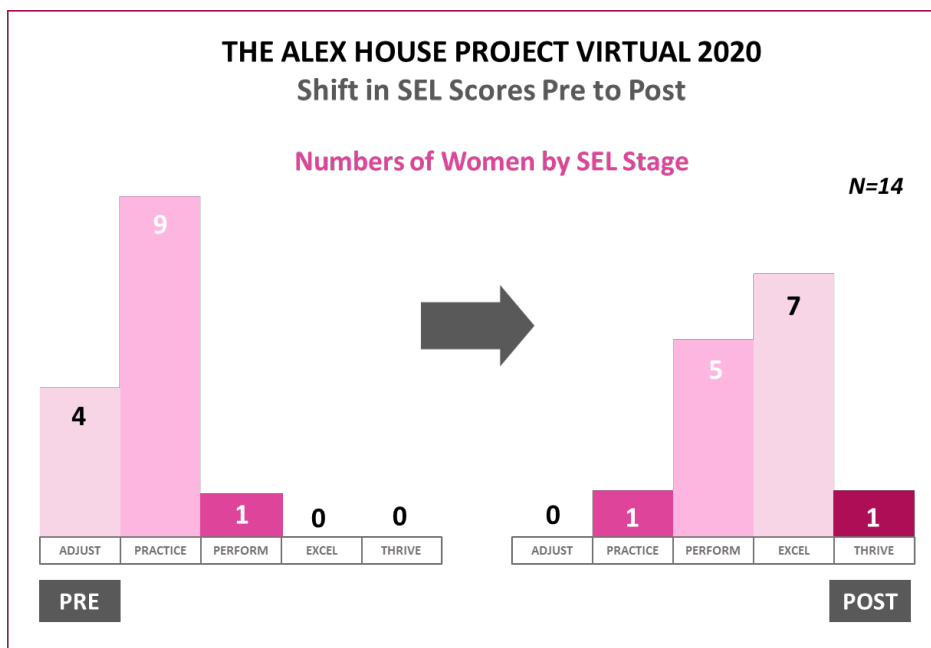


## RESEARCH CONFIRMS THAT INCREASING SEL CORRELATES WITH:

- academic and career success,
- positive relationships,
- physical and mental health, and
- meaningful contributions to society.<sup>2</sup>

Comparing these SEL gains (32 percent increase) with those prior to COVID-19 (25 percent increase), Alex House virtual programming proved more effective. This might be explained by participants being quarantined and having fewer outside distractions, as well as the ever-greater need for support due to the stresses of the pandemic.

As further shown below, the shift from pre to post was evident in all 14 women. These findings affirm that the social emotional skills taught by AHP are taking root in participants.



## IMPORTANT ADVANCES

**8 moms** reached the highest stages: EXCEL and THRIVE, up from zero.

**6** jumped two or more stages

**7** jumped one stage

**1** advanced within the same stage

<sup>2</sup> Council of Distinguished Scientists National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development. The Aspen Institute, September 2017.

*"The girls encouraged me to do more things with my child that would strengthen our connection. I learned how important is it to spend time with your child and grow that bond with them. I feel better able to deal with the mood changes of my daughter."*

*-Dillonna, age 25*

*"Being able to speak in group and have people listen to me made me feel stronger. Also hearing everyone's story. I know I'm not the only one and feel that I belong to something now instead of being alone."*

*-Miranda, age 20*



*“I was amped up about joining. My neighbor had been talking to me about it—how she was a participant and now works there. I was looking forward to learning new stuff and also possibly getting a job helping other moms. Through the class, I gained a sense of understanding and seeing the life of my baby different. Now I know why she is crying or what her noises could mean.”*

*-Laverne, age 21*

[2019 Performance](#)

[AHP Impact Profiles](#)

[Before and After AHP](#)

[Our Theory of Change](#)