



Research Brief

1835 14th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009
202.204.7750 (p) | 202.204.7803 (f)
www.dccollaborative.org
info@dccollaborative.org

The following issue brief is one in a series developed by the DC Arts and Humanities Education Collaborative as a result of its observation and findings working with participating public schools in Washington, DC, through its Arts Education Initiative (AEI) program. The program was made possible by generous support from the DC Commission on Arts and Humanities and the Ford Foundation.

SEPTEMBER 2011

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

DC Arts and Humanities Education Collaborative: Summary of Arts Education Initiative (AEI) Program Evaluation

The following are highlights from the final evaluation report of the DC Collaborative's Arts Education Initiative, involving technical assistance to schools integrating arts across their curriculum. The evaluation was conducted by Robert Horowitz, Ph.D., of Columbia University's Teacher College.

The report findings present data from the third year of AEI program evaluation. In the first evaluation year, evaluators investigated the development of teachers' understanding and implementation of arts integration practices, and provided formative evaluation recommendations to the DC Collaborative. In the following school year, evaluators continued to examine teachers' professional development and implementation of arts integration. During the third year of data collection (2008), evaluators gathered additional data on student development in and through the arts, and examined the relationship between successful implementation of arts integration and student growth.

Arts Integration Enhances Student Content Mastery and Academic Skills Development Across the Curriculum:

Highlights from the Third Year Evaluation Report of the DC Collaborative's Arts Education Initiative

Teachers reported that nearly 80% of students learned reading and writing skills because of DC Collaborative (when aggregating "strongly agree" and "agree" ratings) and over 85% of students "understood more about different cultures."

Data collection method in the third evaluation year included:

- classroom observations in participating schools
- interviews with participating teachers
- teacher surveys (n = 32)¹
- student assessments (n = 757).

Participating teachers assessed each of their students on 15 rating scale items (n = 757). The rating scale items were grouped in 3 categories: (1) Expression, (2) Arts and Engagement, and (3) Academic Learning. Average scores for each category could range from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The highest average scores were in the Arts and Engagement category.

¹ N indicates the number of participants studied.

AEI Teachers Report Their Students Excelled in Arts and Engagement; Expression; and Academic Learning

Level	Arts and Engagement	Expression	Academic Learning
Elementary	4.09	4.09	3.67
Middle	4.32	3.82	4.19

Table 1: Mean Student Scores on a scale of 1 to 5 Regarding Engagement, Expression and Academic Learning per School Level

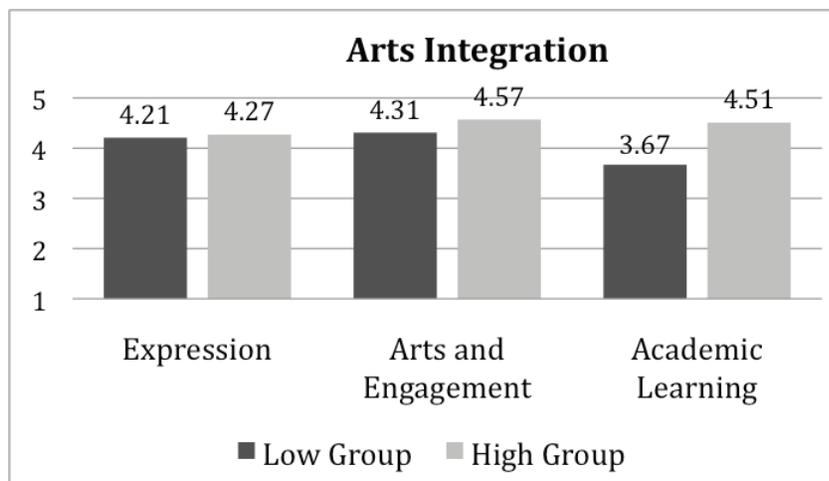
Teacher Mastery of Arts Integration Critical to Improved Student Academic Outcomes

Teachers who viewed themselves as most successful at arts integration were more likely to give their students higher ratings in academic achievement through the arts.

This finding was identified through the following comparative analysis: The evaluator compared teacher ratings and student assessments in 15 participating classrooms. Each teacher completed a teacher survey and a student assessment for each of their students. Ten of the classrooms were from elementary schools and five of the classrooms were from a middle school. Grades ranged from pre-K to eighth grade.

The evaluator selected the four highest-scoring teachers in four categories and compared their student assessment scores with the scores of the lowest-scoring four teachers². Students in the highest-scoring teacher groups had higher average scores in every category, with the greatest difference in the area of academic achievement through the arts.

Teachers With Higher Levels of Arts Integration Mastery Report Higher Levels of Student Achievement through Arts Integration



² The teacher categories were: (1) Effectiveness of Professional Development, (2) Implementation of Arts Integration, (3) School Climate, (4) Ability to Teach Academic Subjects through the Arts.

Student Achievement in Math and Reading Improved in AEI Schools

The DC Collaborative looked at extant data from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education and found that on average, student test scores improved in the seven AEI schools consistently participating in the DC Collaborative’s AEI initiative from the first complete year of implementation (2006) through 2009. Reading proficiency increased by an average of 4.15% while math proficiency increased by an average of 19.7%.

Reading and Math Test Scores for AEI Schools 06-09 (Data from OSSE)

School	Reading proficient/ math proficient (2006)	Reading/math proficient (2009)	Percent rate of increase
Brent	55.08/36.44	39.06/64.06	-16.02 /27.62
ATA	28.03/22.84	44.04/40.6	16.01/17.76
Watkins	48.15/32.80	69.23/67.42	21.08/34.62
Hobson	62.47/41.55	74.87/75.38	12.4/33.83
Whittier	60/44.86	44.93/52.17	-15.07/7.31
Miner	29.63/18.11	35.36/31.49	5.73/13.38
Janney	85.88/82.08	90.8/85.44	4.92/3.36

Arts Integration at AEI Schools Leads to Skills in the Arts

Teachers reported that over 80% of their students “acquired a greater understanding of the arts” and “developed skills in the arts” through the DC Collaborative program, when aggregating “strongly agree” and “agree” ratings. According to the teacher ratings, students’ work reflected creativity, imagination, engagement and interest.

Arts Integration Leads to Ownership and Enthusiasm Among Struggling Students

The DC Collaborative program engaged students through arts-integrated and hands-on learning activities. Teachers observed that students demonstrated more enthusiasm for learning, stronger participation in the classroom, and a sense of ownership of their work. The arts were particularly helpful for engaging some students who otherwise struggled to succeed. According to participating teachers, students were better able to retain and apply information when learned through authentic arts activities, meaning arts activities that were relevant and connected to their own experiences.

Professional Development

Through professional development, DC Collaborative teachers gained a deeper understanding of arts integration and became better prepared to implement arts-integrated units. During the 2006-07 school year, DC Collaborative moved away from large professional development workshops for all participants, and towards site-based contextual support. Each year, a school-based summer session brought teachers together for planning and workshops on arts integration.

Teachers responded positively to survey items about their professional development. Teachers reported that the DC Collaborative was bringing new and valuable resources to their classrooms that they otherwise would not have. Through the program they were able to collaborate and work in new ways with other teachers, and gain new insights into children's accomplishments.

Most teachers reported that they were able to teach reading and writing more effectively through participating in the DC Collaborative's AEI initiative.

"I was looking this year for ways to make the curriculum...spread throughout the year, and have arts be very present in everything that we did." – *Teacher*

"I use all of this as assessment. When we work on any skill it is not just isolated. I see everything as integrated because you cannot separate language arts [from other subjects]...It is a lot more work for the teacher...but these projects are, I think, more comprehensive." – *Teacher*

Some teachers struggled with maintaining schedules and devoting sufficient time to arts integration. Teachers requested additional flexibility in scheduling and implementation.

Positive School Climate

A total of 78% of teachers responded positively when asked if arts integrated activities improved their school climate and brought parents into their school. Almost all teachers reported that their school administration supports the DC Collaborative program.

Teachers Express The Power of AEI

Teachers expressed their appreciation of the AEI program and cited the following program components as most valuable to them: professional development, support, exposing students to the arts, additional resources and funding, and visiting artists.

About the DC Collaborative

The DC Collaborative believes that the arts—inclusive of music, visual arts, theater, dance, and literary arts—are central to the education of every student. A community-based partnership organization, now 60 members strong, the DC Collaborative works to promote quality arts and humanities education for all DC public and chartered public schools for the growth of the whole child. Working with our partners, the DC Collaborative produces such exemplary programs as Arts for Every Student, Professional Development, and the recently launched Arts Education Initiative. The DC Collaborative's Arts Education Initiative (AEI) was made possible by generous support from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities and the Ford Foundation.