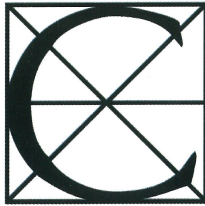


Summary of Findings

Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma

Diane Montgomery, Stacy Otto, Debra Hull
January, 2008



**Project
REATES**

*Connecting Community Resources
Encouraging All Teachers to Educate
with Spirit*

Mission:

The mission of Project CREATES has been to transform teaching and learning with high-quality academic instruction infused with high-quality arts instruction for students attending elementary schools of need in the Tulsa community. The four inter-related aspects of Project CREATES are (1) **arts infusion** co-created with teachers and artists to richly enhance student learning by connecting the arts to all other content areas; (2) **professional development** for teachers and artists; (3) **talent development** for students with arts interest or potential; and (4) **research** on Project outcomes and progress regarding the benefits of arts infusion.

Arts Infusion

Arts infused with other academic content increases student achievement (Hetland & Winner, 2004), transfers learning skills to academic areas (Fiske, 1999), and provides enhancement through the joys of creative expression to the lives of children (Hart, 2001). Student learning outcomes in an arts area and another content area were co-planned for each lesson taught. A series of at least three co-creation meetings with community artists, arts educators or arts coaches occurred for each lesson: co-planning, co-teaching, co-evaluating.

"Co-Creating"

- ◆ Co-Planning
- ◆ Co-Teaching
- ◆ Co-Evaluating

*"Planning with the
artists gave me more
confidence with the
arts."*

CREATES teacher

Professional Development

Teachers were invited to participate in authentic professional development (Guskey, 2003). This required responsive collaboration with teachers on multiple levels. Assisting teachers within their own classroom and school building was undertaken by coaches. Saturday seminars and field trips were conducted across all CREATES schools, and teachers were invited to regional and award-winning state conferences that specialized in talent development or creativity and the arts. Artists participated in professional development learning about the culture of schools and child development.

Talent Development

When students are provided the opportunities to learn in different ways, talent bubbles up within the classroom. As teachers and artists became more attuned to diverse student talent, they encouraged enrollment in special classes as one way to develop student potential interests and strengths in the arts.

Hundreds of students were provided talent development in music through access to high-quality, professional instruction in string instruments and percussion. Performance was heralded as a rewarding experience for students and their families as they discovered and built personal confidence and communication skills.

Research

Rigorous qualitative and quantitative research was conducted over four years. Classrooms were observed; school personnel, families, and community leaders were interviewed; coaches documented work with teachers and artists; and myriad methods and procedures were employed in data collection and analysis.

Data were used to advise project personnel on a weekly basis to make decisions related to students' learning outcomes and teacher satisfaction. Final analytic findings document promising practices for the integral connection between arts infusion and talent development, as well as the value of continuous research.

Professional Development



It was vitally important that teachers co-created professional development opportunities. Teachers chose those activities they felt would assist them in their teaching goals.

As they collaborated with artists, teachers reported a surge in self expression with their own talent area, better skills in managing stress, and greater satisfaction and joy in their teaching. Teaching

strategies that enhanced instruction included collaboration with other teachers and artists and awareness of authentic assessment strategies.

We learned that teachers were willing, motivated and inspired to try new and different forms of professional development and arts infusion the longer they were part of CREATES. The “third-year” was observed as a burst of arts energy and risk taking for teachers!

Arts Resource Coaches

Co-Creation is when professionals from diverse backgrounds collaborate to plan, teach, and evaluate arts-infused lessons.

“Learning comes alive for students when they are engaged in the arts.”

CREATES teacher

One major finding supports the use of coaches to assist teachers in arts infusion and identification of talent. We found it essential that coaches be practicing artists who are certified teachers. As a result, coaches uniquely bring both the culture of the artist and the professionally-educated teacher to the process of co-creation.

Coaches assisted and inspired teachers by assuring and assessing student learning in the arts and other content standards.

Students eagerly anticipated the arts coaches visiting their classroom. Coaches provided demonstrations of arts-infused lessons or ways to work with community artists. Coaches were vitally important in assisting teachers in building confidence to infuse the arts, identify potential talent, and determine when student learning outcomes were met according to benchmarks and standards.

Teacher Changes

Analysis of ethnographic observations, interviews, coaching documentation, and classroom artifacts led to major findings related to teacher change.

Teachers progressed through stages as they were introduced to the arts, collaborated with coaches and artists, and used the arts in their lessons. Starting with curiosity and sometime a little confusion, teachers boldly progressed to expert levels of collaboration and mentorship.

When teachers worked with principals who were actively supportive and encouraging,

they expressed less anxiety about using the arts and were more likely to collaborate with coaches and artists. All principals were supportive of the arts; however, taking action appears to be relevant to establishing the value of talent development in schools.

Teachers developed their own internal theories about the value of creativity and the arts (Long, 2006). Teachers employed various strategies to balance infusing the arts and meeting student assessment expectations (Van Eman, Thorman, Montgomery & Otto, under review).

Teacher Opinion Survey

The *Teacher Opinion Survey* was designed to document teacher attitude toward the arts in schools. The four scales indicated changes in attitudes and activities in arts integration for Student Outcome, Collaboration, Teacher as Artist, and Arts for Arts Sake.

CREATES teachers scored significantly higher than other teachers in the same schools on two scales: Collaboration and Student Outcome. CREATES teachers collaborated with other teachers and artists to a greater degree and their students spent more time learning in the arts.



Arts Infusion and School Achievement

Achievement tests scores and Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests were monitored each year for student achievement indicators. Students in arts-infused classrooms and/or talent development classes did as well or better than students not participating in the arts.

When reading tests scores were analyzed, students who were in Project classrooms scored better than students whose teachers did not participate. Likewise, students in talent development groups scored better on their reading tests than those students who were not in talent development classes, regardless of their

teacher's involvement.

While there were no differences in math scores, we believe we were able to affect literacy more than math because many of the arts-infused lessons included reading skills development, whereas fewer lessons were infused into the math curriculum.

During the course of CREATES, students at the participating schools became more proficient in the arts as evidenced by dramatic increases in the percentage of students passing the arts proficiency tests administered by the District or schools each year.

Perceptions of the Classroom and Creativity

Each year students completed the *My Class Activities* (Gentry & Gable, 2001), which measures student perceptions of their classroom on four scales. Findings differed by years indicating many things influence how students perceive their classes. However, generally, students in Project classrooms rated Interest, Challenge, Choice, and Enjoyment higher than students whose teachers were not involved in arts infusion or professional development. Additionally, students who were in talent development groups rated their regular classrooms as having greater interest and enjoyment whether or not their teacher infused the arts. This finding demonstrates the importance of providing opportunities to express talent which might

then result in positive overall subjective well-being.

Findings demonstrate that as teacher levels of participation in CREATES activities increased, student creativity increased (measured as divergent production of many, varied, unusual and elaborative ideas).

From this we conclude that the arts provide outlets for creative expression and motivation to learn. Students' increased self regulation strategies, such as focus, attending to task, and persistence were reported for students who were involved in talent development.



Teacher Reported Successes for Students

During one year teachers used mp3 players as convenient reporting mechanisms for stories related to using the arts in their classes. From interviews, observations, and mp3 stories, we gleaned that the arts offered students areas in which they could excel, ultimately increasing student motivation and efficacy. Students demonstrated longer attention spans and heightened self-assessment when working on projects that included the arts.

From this we conclude that the arts have a transformational effect on students' self-governing behavior, self-confidence, and self-efficacy (Baum,

Owen & Oreck, 1997; Respress & Lufti, 2006). As children were involved in the arts, they demonstrated improvements in communication and interpersonal skills (Feller & Gibbs-Griffith, 2007). Working with the arts promotes a more collaborative classroom environment.

Our findings suggest that involvement in the arts contributes to the achievement of student-centered "milestones" in holistic development, including thinking, aesthetic, social, emotional, and physical development.

"I saw the sparkle in her eyes and knew she was fully engaged in learning new skills."

CREATES teacher



Community Involvement - Parents and Families



Project activities included hundreds of community events, including visual art displays at libraries, student coffee houses, poetry readings, musical performances, and plays. These events were attended and supported by community agencies and parents and families. One school reported a groundswell increase in parental involvement for the

duration of the Project, and all schools reported that parental interest and participation increased.

We found that partnering with parents and community agencies cultivated children's curiosity and natural love of learning (Stoddard, 2004) fueling parental expectations and high opinions of schools.

"We are so proud of how excited he is to perform and study music."
CREATES parent

Sustainability Successes

Our research revealed key components to sustainability: community support, administrative action, and a critical mass of teacher involvement. Community support surged, evidenced by the many creative connections Tulsa arts agencies offered to sustain the arts in the public schools. Support continues by virtue of donors providing resources for artists in the schools, scholarships for special music school instruction, and sustained professional development for teachers and artists. The immense value of the Project is evidenced by continuing active support from District administrators as well as individual school commitment. CREATES professional development and arts infusion activities have been initiated in Tulsa Public Schools across three

additional schools demonstrating sustainability of the models with principals. We learned that for each school, the number of teachers involved and the level of involvement may depend on administrative support and a "critical mass" of colleagues working toward similar goals.

In addition to Tulsa Public Schools and Oklahoma State University, connections fostered through CREATES activities have been *sustained* by the Arts and Humanities Council of Tulsa and the Barthelmes Conservatory of Music.

References

- Baum, Susan, Owen, Steven, & Oreck Barry (1997). Transferring individual self-regulation process from arts to academics. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 98, 33.
- Feller Jr., T., & Gibbs-Griffith, B. (2007, May). Teaching content through the arts. *Educational Leadership*, 64(8), 48-49.
- Fiske, E. (Ed.). (1999). *Champions of change: The impact of the arts on learning*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership.
- Gentry, Marcia & Gable, Robert (2001). *My Class Activities: A survey instrument to assess students' perceptions of interest, challenge, choice and enjoyment in their classrooms*. (Instrument manual). Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press.
- Guskey, Thomas (2003). What makes professional development effective: *Phi Delta Kappan*, 84, 748-750.
- Hart, Tobin (2001) *From information to transformation: Education for the evolution of consciousness*. New York: Lang.
- Hetland, Lois & Winner, Ellen (2004). Cognitive transfer from arts education to nonarts outcomes: Research Evidence and policy implications. In Elliot W Eisner & Michael D. Day, *Handbook of Research and Policy in Art Education* (pp. 135-161). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Long, Charla (2006). *Understanding personal theory for elementary school teachers implementing curricular change*. Dissertation, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK.
- Respress, T., & Lufti, G. (2006). Whole brain learning: The fine arts with students at risk. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 15, 24-31.
- Stoddard, Lynn (2004). *Educating for human greatness*. Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.
- Van Eman, Linnea, Thorman, Jerilyn, Montgomery, Diane & Otto, Stacy. The balancing act: Arts integration and high-stakes testing. (under review).