

2004-2007 STUDY

Introduction: The Study's Relationship to the Kennedy Center's *Changing Education Through the Arts* (CETA) program

This independent evaluation by RealVisions examined *The Arts Integration Model Schools Program* (AIMS), a comprehensive arts integration professional development program in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Maryland. The study, supported by a three-year Arts in Education Model Development and Dissemination Grant (AEMDD) from the U.S. Department of Education, focused on the impact of professional development at three model schools:

- Dr. Charles R. Drew Elementary School (Drew),
- Kensington Parkwood Elementary School (KP), and
- Potomac Elementary School (PES).

The three model schools were part of the Kennedy Center's *Changing Education through the Arts* (CETA) program and teachers participated in professional development offered by the CETA program as well as other arts organizations. Thus, this report is a broader study of the impact of arts integration professional development, in which the CETA program played a prominent, but not exclusive, role.

The following information is excerpted from the evaluation report, *Final Evaluation Report, June 2007, Montgomery County Public Schools, Arts Integration Model Schools Program, 2004-2007* prepared by RealVisions Consultants: Linda Whitesitt, Elda Franklin, Bennett Lentzner with Nancy Wolcott, editor. June 29, 2007. Sections of the study, specific to the CETA program, are included as an addendum.

EVALUATION BY REALVISIONS¹ 2004-2007

Objectives of the Independent Evaluation²

Evaluation objectives were to:

- Investigate the process of program implementation;
- Identify teacher and student outcomes using performance measures in the AEMDD grant; and
- Provide recommendations for program improvement.

As part of the program review, RealVisions was also engaged by Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance (AEMS Alliance), one of AIMS' partners, to examine the appropriateness of the program's professional development offerings for inclusion in AEMS Alliance's proposed post-baccalaureate certificate in arts integration.

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation of the third year of the AEMDD grant (2006-2007).

Evaluation Methods³

Guiding the evaluation was the AIMS hypothesis that providing capacity-building arts integration professional development opportunities would improve teaching practice by enabling teachers to effectively integrate the arts into instruction, which in turn would engage children in learning in such a way that their academic performance would improve. The evaluation examined the process of program delivery (both professional development for teachers and arts-integrated instruction for students), the outcomes for teachers and students, and the mechanisms that mediated between program delivery and the emergence of outcomes. The evaluation followed a quasi-experimental design with carefully matched comparison conditions. (Comparison schools with matched demographic characteristics were chosen by the Montgomery County Public Schools [MCPS] Department of Shared Accountability.) This approach employed both broad-based and targeted data collection that supported triangulation of data.

Data collection methods included observations, surveys, interviews, focus groups and document analysis. Scale items and questions were determined by the themes that had emerged in teachers' responses to questions posed during the evaluation of years one and two. Subjects of the investigation included program leadership team members and teachers, as well as professional development providers. Student outcome data in the form of test scores was provided by the Maryland State Department of Education's *Maryland Report Card*.

Conclusions, Recommendations and Implications⁴

Overall Successes

The Arts Integration Model Schools program has become an effective agent of change at all levels: classroom, school, system and state. It has offered opportunities and possibilities for improving teacher practice and changing how teachers see themselves. The program has increased student engagement in collaborative learning. At the same time, the program has been a catalyst for whole school change, spurred interest in arts integration at other schools within Montgomery County Public Schools, and created a pathway for training and credentialing Maryland teachers in using arts integration as a strategy for enabling students to learn in and through the arts.

AIMS has accomplished these comprehensive programmatic successes by building a critical mass of teacher leaders committed to arts integration as a means of involving all students in the process of learning. Through the enthusiasm of these leaders and mentors, their growing arts integration skills and knowledge, their development of a common arts integration language, their collaboration with colleagues, and their encouragement of other teachers to become involved in arts integration professional development, they have established the core of an arts integration instructional program that has the potential of changing how Maryland students are engaged in learning.

The development of such a cadre of arts integration teacher leaders would not have been possible without the vision and commitment of the three model school principals and the project director who gave ownership of the AIMS program to the teachers and arts integration lead teachers and supported their growth. In addition, the emergence of teacher leaders was supported by the sustained opportunity given to teachers to participate in a variety of capacity-building arts integration professional development experiences, provided by educators committed to presenting teachers with a diversity of training options and willing to alter their programs to meet teachers' needs. Equally important was the time devoted in-school and during professional development experiences to teachers' collaborative work. These cooperative endeavors gave context and meaning to teachers' individual arts integration efforts.

Teachers as Change Agents

Another factor, one stressed in the third year of the grant, played a major role in solidifying the growth of a body of AIMS teachers devoted to the continuation and spread of arts integration as an effective agent of change. This factor was the emphasis on reflection and action research. Through teachers' individual reflection and research on their arts integration efforts and the impact of those efforts on their students, and through their shared discussions of the fruits of their reflection and research, teachers identified and documented specific ways in which arts integration had helped their students. Looking at the how and why of their arts integration successes deepened their arts integration instruction and inspired them to take the lead in program promotion and dissemination.

Critical Mass of Teachers

It is important to note that a critical mass of teacher leaders emerged in the third year of the AIMS program. It took three years of sustained arts integration training, planning and instruction to prepare teachers who were more comfortable teaching arts integrated lessons and units, taught them with more frequency, and regarded their efforts to be more effective. Seeing their own growth and its impact on their students, teachers joined together to create a community of learners devoted to arts integration as a primary source of helping them make a difference in student lives. Such a community of learners along with the array of professional development choices, effective leadership, a common arts integration language, and support for teacher collaboration, were seen to have affected whole school change at each of the model schools.

Professional Development: The Most Critical Component

The most critical component in improving teacher practice was professional development in arts integration. The more training teachers had, the more they taught in and assessed both arts and non-arts content areas in their arts-integrated lessons and units. Teachers with the most arts integration professional development also perceived more impact on their teaching practice, their students and their school than teachers with less training. In addition, they also carried on more action research projects. It appears that the amount and consistency of arts integration professional development play a significant role in the emergence of an effective cadre of teacher leaders within a strong community of learners.

Emergence of Teacher Leaders

The emergence of teacher leaders as well as the strength of a community of learners at each school has begun to have an impact on the system and the state. As AIMS teachers shared best practices with colleagues in other schools at conferences, as they took the lead in teaching and developing arts integration professional development experiences, and as they communicated the results of their action research projects, a growing number of teachers and principals from other schools throughout MCPS and the state began to implement or expressing interest in implementing arts-integrated instruction. Program dissemination has been assisted by significant support from leadership from AIMS partners, Montgomery County Public Schools, the Maryland State Department of Education, and Maryland institutions of higher education. In its development and inauguration of the post-baccalaureate certificate in arts integration, the state has made it possible for all Maryland teachers to adopt arts integration as a strategy to engage students in learning and heighten their achievement. At the same time, the certificate serves as a model for other states in their arts integration professional development efforts.

Support Structure

This support structure for continued teacher change – an array of capacity-building professional development experiences, a cadre of teacher leaders, a vital learning community, and the development of a certificate in arts integration – provided an invaluable foundation for AIMS teachers in the third year of the program. It gave them some background in the arts, the knowledge to make connections between arts and non-arts curricula, and the tools to engage all students in learning. All of these structural elements made it possible for AIMS teachers to use the arts’ creative and responding processes to help them meet the learning needs of all students, and approach instruction in multiple ways.

Impact on Students

By engaging all students in learning regardless of their level, learning modality or confidence level, arts integration teachers found that their students became more motivated to learn, developed a more positive attitude toward learning, became more self-confident in their ability to learn, sustained more focus during the learning process, and cooperated with other students in ways that effectively promoted learning. In the process, students developed improved cognitive skills, became better readers and writers, expressed aspects of themselves otherwise inexpressible, made connections to real life, and took ownership for their learning. In changing students’ level of engagement in learning experiences, arts integration changed students’ attitudes toward learning and the arts. With these changed attitudes came improved student achievement.

Examining Maryland School Assessment scores – specifically, the percentage of students scoring in the advanced plus proficient levels – in reading and math for the cohort of students who were in the third grade in the first year of the grant and tracking those scores over the three year grant period for students in both the model and comparison schools revealed:

- In reading:
 - In the schools where the percentage of students scoring in the advanced plus proficient levels was relatively high (above 88%) in the first year of the grant

period – KP, PES and their comparison schools – the model schools either maintained that high percentage or increased it slightly while one comparison school rose slightly and the other dropped slightly.

- In the schools where the percentage of students scoring in the advanced plus proficient levels was lower (below 80%) in the first year of the grant period—Drew and its comparison school—the model school percentage rose by 12.7% while the percentage at the comparison school dropped by 5.7%.¹⁷
- In math:
 - In the schools where the percentage of students scoring in the advanced plus proficient levels was relatively high (above 92%)—KP, PES and their comparison schools—the model schools dropped between .9% and 2.4%, and the comparison schools dropped at a greater rate to between 3.6% and 7.2%.¹⁷ (See footnote 13, page 18.)
 - In the school where the percentage of students scoring in the advanced plus proficient levels was lower (below 65%)—Drew—the percentage increased by 23.2%.¹⁸ Drew’s comparison school dropped from 85.5% to 81%.

It appears that arts integration in the model schools with a relatively high percentage of students scoring in the advanced plus proficient levels in reading and math made it possible for the schools to maintain a high percentage (above 90%). In the model school with a lower percentage of students scoring in the advanced plus proficient levels in reading and math, arts integration seemed to make it possible for the school to increase the percentage of students scoring in the advanced plus proficient levels. The most dramatic differences occurred in the model school (Drew) which started the grant period with the lowest percentage. Providing model school teachers at that school with the knowledge and opportunity to implement arts-integrated instruction appears to have made it possible for students to score at a higher level on standardized tests.

It must be noted that arts integration instruction in the model schools may have been only one of a number of variables affecting the increase or maintenance of the percentage of students scoring in the advanced and proficient levels on MSA reading and math tests. Yet, coupled with the perceptions of model school teachers and leaders that arts-integrated instruction made it possible for them to engage all students in learning, it is reasonable to consider arts integration a positive factor in increasing student achievement. The dramatic improvement noted at Drew is consistent with arts integration research indicating that arts integration instruction has a significant impact on students who begin from a point of lower achievement.

Based on classroom observations, comparing the learning experiences in which students were engaged in the AIMS schools 18 (See footnote 13, page 18.) and their paired comparison schools showed that after three years of arts integration instruction, collaborative learning was clearly more frequent at all three AIMS schools. Similarly, teacher use of collaborative learning strategies was more frequent at the model schools. If indeed arts integration instruction contributed to increased student achievement for AIMS students, then perhaps it

did so by increasing the time students spent in collaborative learning experiences. That the observation results did not reveal a difference in other student engagement indicators does not suggest that growth did not occur, but rather that it is important to align hoped for elements of student engagement with instructional activities that result in the desired outcomes.

ADDENDUM: EXCERPTS SPECIFIC TO THE CETA PROGRAM

Although the evaluation report summarized professional development inputs from a number of sources, it included several direct references to the CETA program. These are provided below:

Arts Integration Professional Development⁵

Through the AEMDD grant along with support from Montgomery County Public Schools and the Maryland State Department of Education, AIMS offered teachers the opportunity to participate in professional development experiences that included semester-long courses (in one case, a yearlong seminar/project), single and multiple day workshops, embedded mentoring and co-teaching, long-term coaching, and action research:

- Arts Integration Institute (AII), Towson University – Teachers were offered a number of different arts integration courses.
 - Changing Education through the Arts (CETA), Kennedy Center – Teachers at KP, a CETA school, could choose to participate in six different professional development experiences. Teachers at Drew and PES could participate in two courses (the adapted CETA program) related to tableau. (*See specific course titles below.*)
 - Creating Original Opera (COO), Washington National Opera – Two-day training offered teachers the skills, information and methodologies to guide students in creating an original opera.
 - Imagination Question (IQ), Imagination Stage, Inc. and American University – Teaching artists worked with teachers in one grade level to model and co-teach integrated lessons in reading.
 - Maryland Artist/Teacher Institute (MATI), Maryland State Department of Education and Maryland State Arts Council – Two one-week summer residential programs (introductory and advanced) at the University of Maryland, in which teachers explored the arts as separate content areas and developed strategies for integrating the arts into non-arts curricula.
 - Dance residency with Karen Bernstein – A professional dance artist/arts integration teaching artist worked with teachers to help teachers and students discover natural connections between dance and other curriculum content areas.
- CETA courses included: Examining Arts Integration with Karen Erickson (one session); Basic Monart Draw and Learn Program (two sessions) or the following four session courses: Looking the Write Way: Visual Art as a Catalyst for Writing, Part B; Integrating Dance and Science, Part I; Integrating the Arts with Early Childhood Curriculum; and Tableau: A Theatrical Technique for Learning Across the Curriculum, Part IC. Teachers could also choose to have arts coach Sean Layne work with them in their classrooms on either Tiny Toy Tales or Tableau. In addition, CETA offered an arts coaches evaluation session, meetings for principals, meetings for arts specialists, a school coordinators meeting, a kick-off, and a concluding celebration.
 - Tableau: A Theatrical Technique for Learning across the Curriculum, Part I and Part II.

Structural Support⁶

AIMS schools offered structural support for their arts integration programs by providing time for planning, supporting co-teaching efforts, and encouraging study groups and curriculum mapping....

Study Groups

- Teachers who participated in CETA's arts integration professional development taking part in study groups as part of the course requirements.
- In focus group comments, KP teachers stressed that CETA study groups facilitated and supported rich discussion about how teaching and learning through the arts takes place.

Outcomes: Teachers

Professional Development Experiences⁷

In their focus group comments, KP teachers and leaders were unanimous in praising CETA as the catalyst in making KP an arts-integrated school. Teachers remarked favorably on the immediate practicality and adaptability of its instruction and lesson plans to a variety of subjects and grade levels, the usefulness of student assessment materials, the focus on students' creative work, the effectiveness of the classroom management tools, the impact of offering arts specialists the opportunity to connect with their colleagues at other schools, the well-developed curriculum, and the importance of modeling and coaching with their own students.

Teachers at Drew and PES also had positive things to say about the adapted CETA program.

Teachers' Reflective Practice and Action Research⁸

Teachers were asked to reflect on their arts-integrated instruction in all of their professional development experiences. All CETA programs as well as the Arts Integration Institute's capstone seminar/project courses required substantive reflective practice from their participants – CETA in the form of planning and reflection forms, arts integration research journals and study group assignments, and the capstone seminar/project courses in the form of action research.

In their CETA reflections, teachers noted student behavior they had observed, the questions that arose, their goals for themselves, the things that went well during the lessons, what they would change, how lessons helped students meet objectives in art and non-art areas, the extent to which the lessons developed social skills and motivation to learn, their arts integration comfort level, the additional skills they need, what they learned, and the influence of the experience on their future practice. In their research journals, participants observed what happened in the classroom and what it meant, as well as the implications for their practice. Study group questions varied according to the assignment category.

CETA study groups were considered particularly important by KP teachers because they supported deep reflective practice concerning teaching and learning through the arts. One KP study group took on the assignment from CETA to develop a rationale for arts integration –

“How Does Arts Integration Support Student Learning?”– creating a list of the social, emotional and academic benefits of arts-integrated instruction.

Other Student Outcomes⁹

The CETA research journal entry of one teacher describes this multifaceted impact of arts integration on students:

“I feel as if we as teachers are always interested in the idea of teaching in a variety of ways to cater to the numerous types of learners in our classrooms, but at times it seemed like a distant goal, not something we could easily achieve. I believe that the arts are our way as teachers to make that dream come to life. With the help of drama, music, visual arts and dance, content and vocabulary come to life and become more relevant to the child’s life and experiences and more accessible for young children to grasp.

I truly think that there is usually more than one correct answer and more than one way to view a situation and I think integrating the arts into our lessons, classrooms and lives allows us to teach our children to do many things. I think the arts provide the students with a venue for thinking critically, a setting where they can collaborate with young colleagues/classmates and share, compare and make connections between their thoughts. Not only are we helping to create more intelligent, creative, unique thinkers, we are helping to mold them into respectful, accepting, cultured people.

Experiencing and therefore also learning how to work productively in a cooperative group is a beneficial skill to have. In many traditional styles the child is taught “at” and the assessments are silent, individual and written. I love the idea that students can learn from one another, be active members of class discussions and can gain knowledge and then show their understanding of a concept through numerous different outlets.”

¹ *Final Evaluation Report, June 2007, Montgomery County Public Schools MD, Arts Integration Model Schools Program, 2004-2007* prepared by RealVisions Consultants: Linda Whitesitt, Elda Franklin, Bennett Lentzner with Nancy Wolcott, editor. June 29, 2007.

² Ibid., 1.

³ Ibid., 2.

⁴ Ibid., 27-30.

⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁷ Ibid., 8.

⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁹ Ibid., 14.