

John F. Kennedy Center for the Arts National Partnership KS/MO Team Program:

2019-21 Partners in Education Findings

Submitted by

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Abstract

A growing body of research indicates that arts-rich learning environments provide tremendous benefits to students' academic and nonacademic success. This report presents the project evaluation results of the Integrated Arts Education Program administered by Amanda Mayes of Second Act Research. A quasi-experimental, pre/post with comparison trial took place in eleven elementary classrooms matched by grade level. Results indicate that arts integration teaching methods significantly improve educational outcomes. Arts integrated teaching techniques led to improvements in knowledge of core subject content, enjoyment of learning, engagement, and creativity. These improvements were statistically significant. The findings provide evidence that arts integration teaching methods can produce a significant, positive impact on the educational development of elementary students. The quasi-experimental evaluation was paired with a non-experimental survey delivered to teachers who participated in arts integration workshops. The findings complement and support results from the in-class experimental portion of the study. Moreover, though classrooms were matched by grade level, this was a uniquely challenging two years for public educators and for project evaluation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the students received arts integration teaching in a traditional classroom setting while other students received content virtually. An additional inquiry into the impact of online instruction indicates teachers believed online instruction was an effective mode of continuing to learn about arts-rich teaching practices.

Introduction

For many years, our understanding of the benefits of arts involvement has been limited to correlational studies that did not investigate causality through experimental designs (Catterall, 1997; Winner and Cooper, 2000; Winner & Hetland, 2001). However, the arts are gaining traction as a key component of a child's education. There is now a burgeoning body of research showing strong relationships between the skills fostered by the arts and academic and social skills (Bowen and Kisida, 2019; Saunders, 2019). Despite growing evidence that involvement in the arts benefits children, many school systems struggle to find funding for any subjects not covered on standardized testing. The lack of funding for arts programming is complicated by the fact that the decrease in arts opportunities has been inequitable across student subgroups. White students have experienced very little change, while Black and Latinx students experienced declines of 49% and 40% respectively. In addition, students whose parents lack a high school diploma experienced a seventy-seven percent decline in arts opportunities (Rabkin and Hedberg, 2011). And, because early arts engagement predicts arts participation as adults, the impact of this lack of arts exposure in childhood likely has lasting results (Elpus, 2017; Hernandez, 2018). A common strategy to address inequities in access to the arts is to build school-community partnerships. These community partnerships typically consist of building and district level administration, arts/cultural institutions, financial supporters, researchers, and a facilitating organization (Bowen & Kisida, 2017; Perille, 2016). Such partnerships have flourished in urban areas.

One such partnership, the Partners in Education program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, was formed within the Kansas City metro area. Partner members include the Johnson County Community College Midwest Trust Center Arts Education Program, Kansas City Young Audiences, Shawnee Mission School District, and Liberty Public Schools. This partnership team is committed to ensuring arts access to all children in the Greater Kansas City Metro area. The team strives to provide effective professional development for area teachers and to evaluate the effectiveness of that programming. The arts integration team would like to build an effective, evidence-based case that demonstrates the value of a regional, multi-layered professional development program. After preliminary research conducted in the 2017-18 school year indicated positive results when using arts integrated lessons (Mayes, 2018), the Partners in Education program expanded the scope of its research to include

a quasi-experimental investigation of the benefits of arts integration. Those results were overwhelmingly positive in demonstrating that arts integration teaching practices offer a variety of benefits for students, including improvements in knowledge of core subject content, enjoyment of learning, engagement, and creativity. The improvements were statistically significant (Mayes, 2019). This report continues that line of inquiry, although with the additional factor of an academic year highly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in the spring of 2020, all research for this project was put on hold. As a result, some of the students received arts integration teaching in a traditional classroom setting while other students received content virtually. Thus, an additional analysis of the impact of the shift to online learning platforms will be included in this report.

Description of the Arts Integration League

Created in 2014, The Arts Integration League is a “forum for creative teaching strategies” (Johnson County Community College Midwest Center, n.d.). It provides teachers in the Shawnee Mission School District and Liberty Public Schools with numerous arts-related professional development opportunities throughout the year. The Arts Integration League lists three goals for their arts programming for teachers:

- Expand their abilities to integrate the arts into the curriculum
- Provide innovative teaching techniques and tools
- Inspire the artist within each of them (Arts Education: Professional Development, n.d.)

Teachers have a variety of professional development activities to choose from and can attend any that are of interest. All workshops were developed in partnership with the John F. Kennedy for the Performing Arts and were primarily taught by Kennedy Center Teaching Artists. Kennedy Center Teaching Artists are noted for “their extensive knowledge of their art form, its connections to the curriculum, and experience teaching their art form to students and teachers” (CETA, n.d.). In the fall of 2019, teachers chose from these arts integration professional development activities:

- Laying the Foundation for Arts Integration
- Shadow Math: Exploring Mathematics Through Shadow Puppetry
- Lines and Shapes for Math Readiness

- Looking the Write Way

In the spring of 2021, teachers chose from these virtual arts integration professional development activities:

- Dance and Movement Strategies for Virtual Learning
- Drawing Symbols for Virtual Learning

Workshops were typically three-hour sessions offering teachers hands-on experience in the arts medium being used. Teachers can also participate in the annual symposium, a two-day, in-depth overview of arts integration techniques. All workshops provided in-depth instruction to classroom teachers on art integration strategies.

Program Evaluation Framework

Program evaluation enables arts practitioners to improve program results, helps funders understand your work, demonstrates accountable use of funding, engages stakeholders, helps recognize the value of the arts, and makes the case for additional resources (Georgia Council for the Arts, 2007). Program evaluation is also a modern research methodology for art education described by Thurber in the *Handbook of Research and Policy in Art Education* (2004). Thurber defines Program Evaluation as a subset of Theoretical Inquiry/Paradigm Research in that “this method requires research skills similar to those of content analysis, but the difference is the researcher wants to know why certain educational communities understand reality in the ways that they do” (pp. 499-500). The assessment model used to evaluate this programming builds on the work of a study of the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE). CAPE is a well-designed extensive arts integration program with substantial district and foundation support (Catterall and Waldorf, 1999). Catterall and Waldorf found that to carry out successful arts integration, the following are needed:

1. Kids should see connections and walk away with bigger ideas.
2. The students take their work seriously.
3. The expressions and activities in the arts should genuinely speak to important areas of the academic curriculum. This also means that the content is seen through more than one form, e.g., beyond the traditional written and spoken word.

4. The content lesson and the artistic lesson are of equal importance.
5. The experience has a planned assessment with rubrics or scoring guides.
6. The lesson-plan should grow from state curriculum standards in both content areas and the arts. (Catterall and Waldorf, 1999, p. 58)

In addition to well-planned lessons, research indicates successful arts integration includes the following:

- Supportive principals
- Highly skilled artists
- Adventurous, risk-taking teachers
- Well-defined learning objectives
- Matching objectives to assessment plans
- A reliable schedule to make school visits convenient for artists
- Teachers should choose from art forms they like
- Sharing in faculty meetings
- A good steering committee (Catterall and Waldorf, 1999, p. 59)

This framework will be used to inform the evaluation of the Kansas/Missouri John F. Kennedy Center Integrated Arts Education Program.

Study Design

Description of the Integrated Arts Education Program

The Integrated Arts Education Program (IAEP) is a community partnership designed to assist teachers in the Greater Kansas City area with arts integration instruction. Teacher participants in the Shawnee Mission School District and Liberty Public Schools were offered the opportunity to participate in further research on the impact of arts integration techniques. With the assistance of program coordinators in both districts, teachers were assigned to the IAEP based on their interest in arts integration practices.

Two teachers in the Shawnee Mission district and five in Liberty Public Schools elected to receive arts integration workshops with a Kennedy Center Teaching Artist. These teachers and their students serve as the treatment group. The control group consists of two teachers in Shawnee Mission and five in the Liberty Public Schools and their students. Teachers in the control group covered the same topics as

the Kennedy Center Teaching Artists, but used traditional teaching techniques. Teachers who volunteered to participate in the control group will be provided with the opportunity to work with teaching artists in the following academic school year. (Note that the number of teachers who were both interested and able to participate in the study is lower than the previous year due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic). In addition to the classrooms participating in the experimental design portion of this project, other teachers shared feedback on their experiences at arts integration professional development sessions throughout the year.

The following research questions guide the assessment of the Integrated Arts Education Program (IAEP) impact:

- Do students learning “core” content through the IAEP understand the material taught as well as or better than their peers learning through traditional teaching methods?
- Does the IAEP increase students’ enjoyment of learning activities and inspire them to learn more?
- Does the IAEP impact student and teacher desire to engage and participate in the arts?
- What other benefits does the IAEP offer teachers and students?

Participants

The study is made of two parts:

- Experimental: Teachers (and classrooms) who attended professional development sessions and who received training from Kennedy Center artists
- Non-experimental: Teachers who only attended professional development sessions.

Students and teachers in The Shawnee Mission School District and Liberty Public Schools participated in the experimental portion of the research for this project. In the experimental project components, students met with teaching artists from the Kennedy Center. Sessions took place either in the regular classroom space, a multi-purpose room within the respective schools, or virtually.

Arts integration professional development sessions were also available to a wide range of teachers who did not participate in the experimental portion of data collection. Teachers from the following school districts attended professional development sessions:

Academy for Integrated Arts
ArchDiocese of Kansas City, Kansas
Blue Valley School District
Fort Zumwalt School District
Haysville Schools
Hickman Mills
Kansas City Kansas Public Schools
Kansas City Public Schools
Lawrence
Lee's Summit
Liberty Public Schools
Maize School District
McLouth
North Kansas City
Raytown Quality Schools
Sarasota County Schools
Shawnee Mission School District
Springfield Public Schools
Wichita Public Schools

Some professional development took place during the school day during regularly scheduled staff development time, some took place after school, and other sessions took place during summer vacation. As a result of the pandemic, additional sessions were offered in a virtual format. Teachers often attended more than one professional development session in any given school year.

Data Collected

For the experimental portion of this report, data collected included student pre- and post-assessments of the material being covered. In preparation of the relevant class sessions, teachers participating in the experimental group worked directly with Kennedy Center teaching artists to plan the curriculum units and execute arts-integrated teaching methods. Teachers in the experiment's control group taught the same content using traditional instruction methods (ex: reading the textbook, lecturing). One classroom from the experimental group and two from the control group originally enrolled in the study did not complete data collection as a result of the pandemic. In total, 196 students completed the pre- and post-assessments.

One example of an arts integrated lesson that provided pre- and post-assessment data came from a second grade teacher from the Liberty school system (whose partner in the control group did not complete data collection). They used arts integration techniques to teach a unit on poetry. The lesson plan was co-developed with Kennedy Center artist Harlan Brownlee. Unit objectives focused on reading fluency, developing vocabulary, writing a fiction or nonfiction poem, and applying standard English grammar. The lesson was taught virtually over Zoom, and Shel Silverstein's *Giving Tree* was provided as an example. The teacher utilized Google Sheets to teach basic vocabulary associated with the lesson, and students were asked to move their bodies to portray the words while watching at home (ex: show me stillness with your body versus trembling). The class composed the following poem as a group:

Springtime

Flowers sprout slowly. Growing bigger into blooms.

Wet wiggly worms slither through the garden.

Owls hoot in the night.

Bees buzz around.

We eat ice cream to cool down; a sweet sugary treat.

Birds chirp in the morning.

Unit assessments were co-created by the classroom teachers and teaching artists. Assessments from the poetry unit as well as other units included questions such as:

- A word that names a person, place or thing is a [.....].
- Which of the images below represents particles of a gas?
- Draw 1 thing that a plant needs but an animal does not need.
- In the sentence "Tim rode his bike to school," the word "rode" is a(an):

- Any group of people living together in a country, state, city, or local community has to live by certain rules. The system of rules and the people who make and administer them is known as a [.....].

In the non-experimental, descriptive portions of this report, the data source was surveys given to teachers after arts integration professional development sessions. A total of 263 teachers responded to short surveys with four-point, Likert scale questions ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Questions included:

- The session included content that ties to district curriculum and initiatives.
- The session provides strategies to encourage student critical thinking.
- After the session, I feel confident in using arts integration processes in my teaching environment.

Surveys also included the following short answer questions:

- How have you integrated the arts into your classroom/school in the past?
- What are your initial impressions about the arts integration techniques you have learned about as part of this session?
- How do you plan to use the arts integration techniques you learned in your classroom?
- How effective was digital instruction in comparison to past, in person, instruction?

Teachers who also participated in lessons with the Kennedy Center teaching artists as part of the experimental portion of the study were given additional survey questions, including:

- How might arts integration practices meet some of the challenges you face in the classroom?
- What support do you need to provide arts integration practices to your students?
- How did the students react to the arts integration techniques?

Students were surveyed on their learning experiences. Twenty students who learned using traditional instruction and 283 students who participated in arts-rich instruction were asked to rate their experiences using a four-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Questions included:

- My teacher/teaching artist helped me better understand the subject matter
- My teacher/teaching artist helped me be creative
- My teacher/teaching artist inspired me to learn more

Students surveys included short answer questions such as:

- How did you show your teacher and classmates what you learned?
- What did you like about working with your teacher/teaching artist on this lesson?

Results

Quasi-Experimental Data Collection : Knowledge of Core Content

Of the fourteen classrooms that participated in the study, eleven classrooms completed the pre- and post-test assessments (six from the treatment group and five from the control group). Table 1 outlines the percentage of correct responses in these assessments of the material. Students in the treatment group exhibited an average improvement of 26.85% between pre- and post-test, while students in the control group had an improvement of 23.43%.

Treatment	Pre Test % Correct	Post Test % Correct	Improvement	Control	Pre Test % Correct	Post Test % Correct	Improvement
Kinder class 1	56.62%	94.12%	37.50%	Kinder class 2	49.11%	89.29%	40.18%
2nd class 3	34.38%	96.00%	61.63%	2nd class 4	51.56%	86.72%	35.16%
2nd class 5	78.50%	85.83%	7.33%	2nd class 6	67.76%	88.82%	21.05%
2nd class 7	41.60%	51.47%	9.87%	2nd class 8	4.52%	5.92%	1.40%
3rd class 9	46.67%	81.33%	34.66%	3rd class 10	45.33%	64.67%	19.34%
3rd class 11	66.67%	76.79%	10.12%				
		average	26.85%			average	23.43%

Table 1: Treatment & Control Pre- and Post-Test Total Percentage Correct Responses

The classes in the treatment group all made gains in their understanding of core content, with five of the six classes making statistically significant gains. In a paired sample, one-tail t-test, p values were 0.00,

0.00, 0.00, 0.07, and 0.00, respectively. Only the third-grade class without a corresponding class in the control group did not make a statistically significant gain with a p value of 0.88. Three of the five control group classes made statistically significant gains while two did not. When comparing the treatment and control gains, three of the classes receiving arts integration instruction made statistically significant gains compared to their peers learning using traditional instructional methods. Second grade class 3 had a p value of 0.01 when compared to Second grade class 4. Second grade class 5 exhibited a p value of 0.00 over class 6 and Third grade class 9 had a p value of 0.04 over class 10. The remaining two groups (classes x and y) were not statistically better gains than their corresponding control group classes.

In addition to gaining content knowledge at an often significantly higher rate, students receiving arts-rich instruction benefited in other ways. 42.33% of students who participated in arts-rich instruction felt their instruction methods helped them be creative compared to 26.32% of students learning with traditional classroom instruction. Students reported understanding the subject matter better and enjoying demonstrating what they had learned. Student comments backed these findings and include:

- “That was so fun and I would TOTALLY do it again!”
- “I think what you taught me helped a lot.”
- “He pushed us to do better.”
- “Something I liked about working with him was he would make us try and try until we got something right.”
- “I really liked that he tried and helped us on the cooperation one so that we could like really get everything done and get better at it.”

Non-Experimental Evidence of Program Impact

Evidence from the teachers and students who did not participate in the quasi-experimental portion of the research indicates additional benefits to arts integrated instruction.

One of the benefits of the arts integration professional development sessions is the collaborative nature of the programs fostered both amongst the teachers and their students. 97% of teachers were inspired to foster relationships with colleagues to further support arts integration in their classrooms. One teacher stated:

"I really enjoyed this session, and I was actually thinking I was too busy to attend. I'm not artistic, so I assumed it wouldn't really matter if I couldn't make it. But "Kennedy Center" pushed me to just see what I could glean and I'm so glad I decided to make room. This is such a cool technique, useful to more than just art teachers, and something I can use to make learning more enjoyable for my kids. I love it and hope to share it with colleagues. Thanks very much!"

In addition, 96% of the teachers surveyed reported learning techniques for teaching student collaboration. This knowledge was carried into their classrooms, with 86% of students stating they enjoyed working with other classmates in a group. Relatedly, 96% of teachers also believed arts integration workshops provided them with strategies for teaching effective interactive communication skills..

In addition to the benefits to collaboration and communication, there was a clear understanding amongst teachers that the arts integration workshops were valuable uses of their time that gave them tools to be successful in their classrooms. Teachers believed they benefited from the following components of the workshops:

- 95% believed workshops provided them with content that ties to district curriculum and initiatives
- 94% believed workshops provided them with opportunities to design lessons for their students in their content areas
- 96% believed workshops provided them with strategies to encourage student critical thinking
- 94% believed workshops provided them with strategies for assessing for student learning
- 82% believed workshops provided them with examples to address issues of accessibility and inclusiveness

Additional teacher comments include:

- "Thank you so much for new, useful material I can incorporate immediately, which reaches both my in-person and virtual kids, and which focuses on a neglected corner of whole-child learning. Many thanks!"
- "It far exceeded my expectations related to being able to use this with my gifted students in the future."
- "Thank you so much for allowing us these amazing opportunities. I am very grateful."

A final benefit the arts integration workshops offered teachers was confidence in their ability to successfully use the techniques acquired during professional development. 96% of teacher participants believed they gained knowledge and skills relevant and useful in their classrooms. An impressive 96% of teachers reported that they gained confidence in using arts integration processes in their teaching environments. Following training, a teacher reported, "I thought this class taught me simple techniques to use and gave me ideas I can put into practice." Another teacher stated:

"I feel far more confident now. I have always incorporated artful mediums to teach both psychology and sociology in the college setting. This was a more literal use of art techniques - which is very cool! I am also an artist (but a secret - sort of accidental one). I like to set up learning experiences about our shared humanity - art is the perfect match for this (so open to interpretation and personal connection, but with a recognition of our shared fate in time/space/etc.)."

Impact of Virtual Instruction

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection was paused in the spring of 2020 as schools closed or were forced to move to virtual instruction. As this was already a large transition for classroom teachers, this entire study was halted. Initially, there was hope that all instruction would be delivered in person by the spring of 2021 but this did not become reality. As a result, some of the instruction (both to students and training sessions offered to teachers) was delivered digitally in the spring of 2021. Though it is outside of the bounds of this work to understand the full scope of the impact on education, the surveys did address the effectiveness of online training using Zoom. The results were highly positive, with 86.54% of participants stating the online instruction was either extremely or very effective, with the remaining participants believing it was at least slightly effective. No one believed the online instruction was completely ineffective. Participant comments aligned with these findings and included:

- "I thought this was extremely effective because we are able to communicate easily and use technology to connect and share ideas and pictures. I really think the independent course is also phenomenal and helps support this."

- “I enjoyed getting some background knowledge in the subject in the pre-course work and then clarifying my learning with practice in the zoom session.”
- “The session was well planned and very effective. Digital tools were just as effective.
- “Presenters excel at adapting content for a virtual platform!”
- “It was, actually, more convenient to do the workshop from home. The time and logistics of travel can be challenging.”

Teacher participants were pleased to add tools to their remote instruction “toolboxes” and offered comments like:

- “Harlan did a great job not only demonstrating how well remote arts integration can be done but also showed technology tricks.”
- “I LOVED how we learned all these new techniques for connecting with students via the Zoom platform. It was super relevant for the times we are living in.”
- “I liked that you showed how to make it work in my classroom tomorrow. Thank you for making us move along with you. It's a little harder for me after a whole day of teaching, but it was very effective so now I should feel confident doing it with my students.”

Limitations & Recommendations

This study marks the third (and fourth, as a result of COVID) year of a three-year study aimed at investigating the impact of the Integrated Arts Education Program. In year one, all data collected was anecdotal. Year two marked the first attempt at a quasi-experimental, pre/post-test, matched pairs design. Although there were plans to scale up data collection in the final year, the COVID pandemic resulted in a smaller data sample than was planned. To better evaluate the program in the future, the following considerations will be suggested:

- Collect demographic data on all students participating in the quasi-experimental portion of the project (this was disrupted due to the pandemic).
- Expand data collection to include more classrooms in the quasi-experimental, pre/post-test design to detect further differences between the treatment and control conditions.

- Expand data collection to include attendance records, behavior records, and standardized test scores. These measures would be more holistic and aid in understanding the bigger picture.
- Build on teacher excitement and support classroom work by providing additional teacher training sessions and opportunities to practice the arts integration skills.
 - Specifically, teachers cite a need for additional instruction time with their students. One teacher stated she is in need of, “experience and good opportunities to learn best practice from experts.” Feedback within the classroom would help the teacher who stated, “This is very new to me so I am always trying to improve and teach at the same time. I do not always know if I am doing it correctly.”
 - Additional support would also help teachers create buy-in from their colleagues. As one teacher stated, “I find myself stumbling now and then when trying to get other educators to buy in. I don’t feel like I am fully equipped to help them dive in as well as I could be in a few years...I will keep trying though!”
- Continue to create additional arts resources. One teacher stated, “I just need more ideas of what to do.” It may be helpful to have teaching artists provide sources of visuals/objects needed as part of their lesson planning with teachers.
- Continue to support collaboration amongst teachers. This is clearly happening at the building level and is crossing state and district lines during the annual symposium, Arts Integration League meetings, and at some professional development sessions. When gathered for professional development, an arts-specialist teacher stated, “I want to partner with a classroom teacher in my school to implement this technique in their room.” As more teachers complete arts integration professional development, collaborations within buildings and districts and across district and state lines should continue to be fostered.

Conclusion

This investigation marked the end of a multi-year, quasi-experimental, pre/post-test, matched pairs trial examination of the Integrated Arts Education Program. The program was again implemented at the quasi-experimental level in two corporations and crossed the Missouri/Kansas state line. Although

instruction was modified significantly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the quick switch to virtual instruction showed the resilience and effectiveness of the arts as a teaching tool in any environment. Arts-integrated teaching techniques, whether in person or virtual, led to improvements in knowledge of core content, enjoyment of learning, higher levels of engagement, and higher levels of creativity. As one student stated, “He [Sean Layne visiting artist?] helped us know what our energy meant and he helped [us] know that we always take care of our own bodies. And even if other people are having a bad day we can make it better or we can just focus on ourselves.” Or, as a teacher stated, “[Arts integration] is simple and effective, obtainable at any age and ability level.” Throughout the past four years, evidence collected as a part of this project overwhelmingly indicates the arts integration practices used in the Integrated Arts Education Program are making a difference in the Shawnee Mission and Liberty Public Schools. Although the research portion of this project has drawn to a close, I am certain the benefits of arts-rich instruction will continue to be felt in the Greater Kansas City area as a result of this program.

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