

**Arts Corps Program Evaluation
2008-09**

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Executive Summary

Evaluation findings from the 2008-09 program year indicate that Arts Corps classes are valued by both program partners and the young people they serve. Across artistic disciplines and in a variety of settings, students were engaged and enthusiastic participants and program partners reported high levels of satisfaction with classes held at their sites.

Access to Arts Classes: In 2008-09, Arts Corps classes served 3,024 students in 36 sites across grades K-12. Almost three-fourths (68%) of partner sites serve a population in which the majority of students qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch, and about 78% of students at those sites are students of color. About 7% of middle and high school students who took an Arts Corps class indicate they have had no prior arts classes. The overall attendance ratio for all enrolled students is 80%.

High-Quality Programming: Interviews with program partners indicate a strong level of satisfaction with Arts Corps programming: 100% of partners who responded report that classes at their program site met or exceeded their expectations. Partners also report that students demonstrated increased skills and competencies in art, in the ability to express ideas and feelings, and in the ability to demonstrate the Creative Habits of Mind. Over 90% of students report that their Arts Corps class was a positive experience.

Creative Habits of Mind: Evidence suggests that teaching artists and students actively grapple with the Creative Habits of Mind (increased courage and risk-taking, imagining possibilities, persistence and discipline, reflection, and critical thinking) in Arts Corps classes. A majority of program partners report observing evidence of student learning and growth in four out of five creative habits. Most classroom reflections from teaching artists indicate a strong understanding of each of the habits and how their teaching incorporates them in a unique way. Program partners, students, and teaching artists consistently reported that increased courage and risk-taking, imagining possibilities, and persistence and discipline were an integral part of their Arts Corps experience. The Creative Habit least consistently cited was reflection.

Artistic Skills and Competencies: 100% of partners interviewed reported that the Arts Corps classes held at their site were successful in increasing students' artistic competencies. Partners offered examples of students being exposed to new art forms as well as deepening skills in areas they were already familiar with. Student responses indicate that increasing their artistic skills was often the most valued part of their experience.

Ideas and Feelings: The majority (96%) of partners agree that Arts Corps classes encourage students to express ideas and feelings in art, or to develop aesthetic sensitivity to artwork and everyday experience. The majority of students also report increased self-confidence in their ability to express themselves.

Sense of community: While this is not a stated goal for Arts Corps classes, many students, teaching artists and partners indicate that Arts Corps classes foster a stronger sense of community and belonging for participants.

Introduction and Methodology

Arts Corps was founded on the belief that all young people should have access to the benefits of quality arts education. As many public schools have had to cut back or eliminate arts education programs, Art Corps attempts to fill the gap and provide young people with opportunities to work with professional artists who are also highly skilled teachers.

The Arts Corps model focuses on four major program goals, which were used as a framework for this evaluation:

- Increasing access to arts programming;
- Fostering creative habits of mind (imagining possibilities, critical thinking, persistence and discipline, courage and risk-taking, and reflection);
- Fostering the ability to express ideas and feelings through art; and
- Fostering artistic competencies.

Evaluators analyzed qualitative and quantitative data collected by Arts Corps staff during the 2008-09 program year. Data included student demographic information and attendance records, student pre- and post-class surveys, teaching artist surveys, partner surveys and interviews, and transcripts from elementary school focus groups at two sites.

After evaluators presented Arts Corps with an initial set of findings, administrative staff and teaching artists met to reflect on them and discuss implications for future programming. As a final step, the staff and evaluators collaborated on the “Lessons Learned” section at the end of this evaluation that outlines their priorities for the upcoming year.

While evaluators did not initially intend to analyze the evaluation tools that Arts Corps uses, there were challenges with data that arose during the process which became an additional focus of this work. For example, the way the data collection tool is structured presented evaluators with certain technical challenges when attempting to extract information. Because of this, some of the evaluation’s Lessons Learned section focuses on helping Arts Corps increase their capacity for external evaluation.

Access to Arts Programming

Arts Corps seeks to bring quality arts programming to young people who typically have less access to creative education. Program goals in this area are:

- Expose youth who would otherwise not have access to the power of the arts; and
- expose more youth overall to the power of the arts.

In 2008-09, Arts Corps served 2,374 unique students. There were 3,024 total enrollments, of which 1,947 students enrolled in one class and 427 enrolled in two or more. Arts Corps served students at 36 sites. Program partner sites included schools, community centers, and other organizations.

About half of all students participated in after-school classes, and about half were served by in-school residencies, special projects, and one-day workshops combined. This number includes students who did not finish a class (see page 10 for more information about attendance).

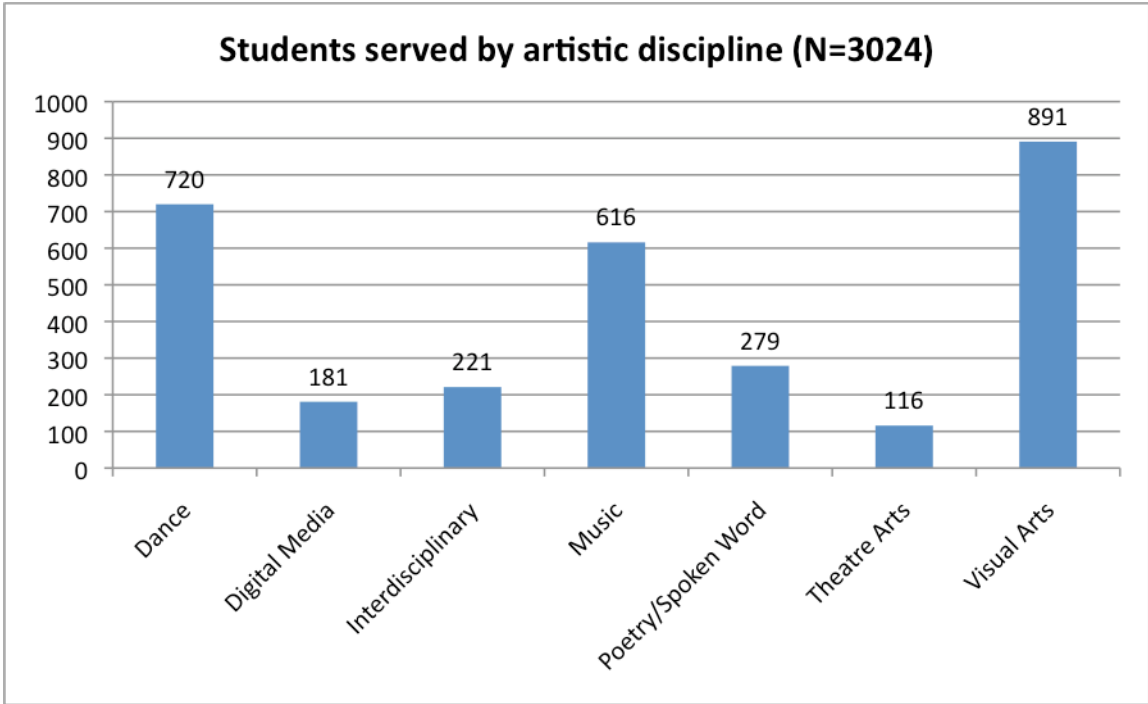
Number and percent of enrollments by program type

Program Type	Number of Enrollments	Percent of Enrollments
After School Class	1633	54%
Residency	838	28%
Special Projects	495	16%
Workshops	58	2%
Total	3024	100%

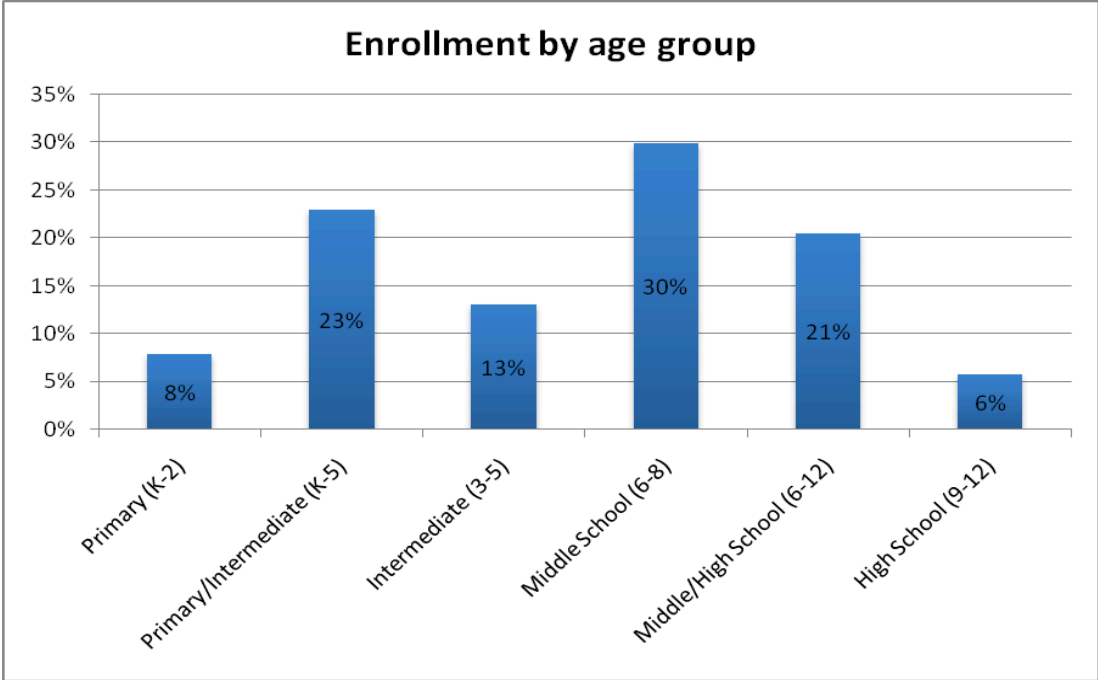
Compared to last year, Arts Corps total enrollment decreased by about 15% (there were 3,572 enrollments at 41 sites served in 2007-08). This reflects a planned decrease in the number of special projects and introductory workshops conducted by Arts Corps. It also reflects an unplanned reduction in the number of after school classes caused by the downturn in the economy and the resulting impact on program partner funding. This downturn will continue to impact Arts Corps in the coming year as schools and community organizations face funding cuts for arts education programs.

Program Type	08-09 Number of Students	07-08 Number of Students	Percent change
After School Class	1633	1787	-9%
Residency	838	774	+8%
Special Projects & Workshops	553	1011	-45%

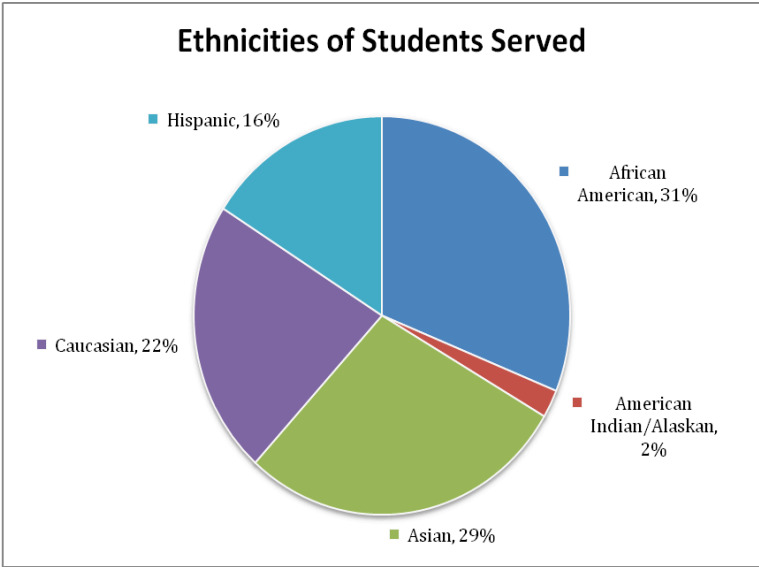
This year, most students were served in the areas of visual art, dance and music, with the fewest students participating in theatre arts.



Arts Corps served students from kindergarten to high school, with slightly more (57%) classes serving middle and high school. Of all students served, 43% were female, 42% were male, and 15% did not identify a gender.



Program partners report that the majority (78%) of students (78%) served at their organizations are students of color, while about 22% are Caucasian.

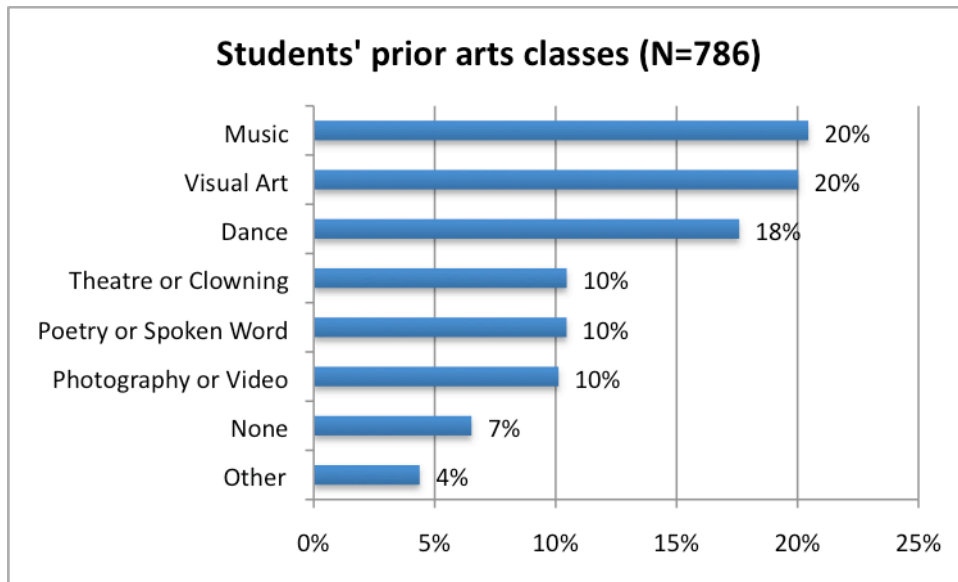


Partners also report that the majority (68%) of students served by partner sites are eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch, an indicator of students living at or below the poverty level.

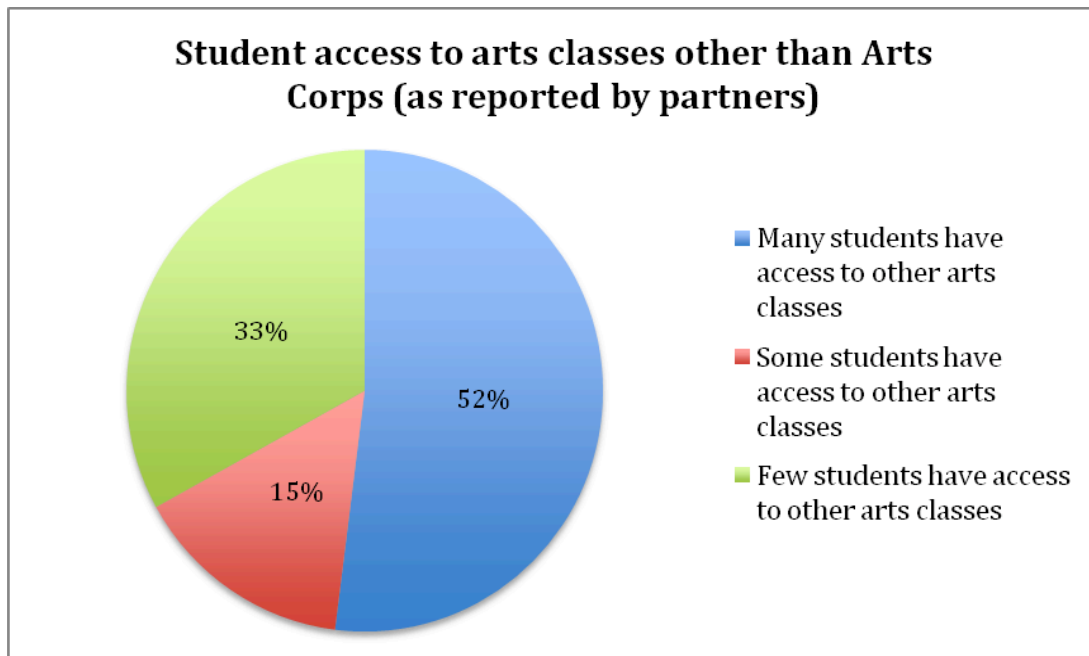
Students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch, by class

	Number of classes	Percent of classes
More than half (60-100%) of students are eligible	127	68%
About half (40-60%) of students are eligible	51	27%
Less than half (0-40%) of students are eligible	10	5%

Arts Corps classes serve some students who may have little or no access to other arts courses. About 7% of middle and high school students who completed a pre-class survey reported not having ever taken another arts class. Students who had previously taken an arts class were most likely to have taken a music or visual arts class.



Program partners from about half of the sites served report that most or all of their students already have access to arts classes, and that Arts Corps provides a unique opportunity for a small percentage of students. About 15% of partners report that about half of their students would not have arts classes without Arts Corps. About a third of all partners report that Arts Corps provides the only access to arts classes for the majority of their students.



Some program partners explained why students at their site had infrequent or inconsistent access to arts classes:

Our school doesn't offer any after school classes of this kind. Only some of our students have access to extra-curricular activities, so it is great that we can provide this for them.

If students have an arts experience, it's tied into their general instruction/curriculum. They may have infrequent arts activities in class.

We had our arts program cut back significantly...in the last two years, including our arts teacher.

4th and 5th graders have access to music classes, but there are no formal art classes other than what the teachers themselves coordinate.

Some program partners reported that they did not have a clear sense of what other arts experiences their students could access, particularly if the partner site was not a school.

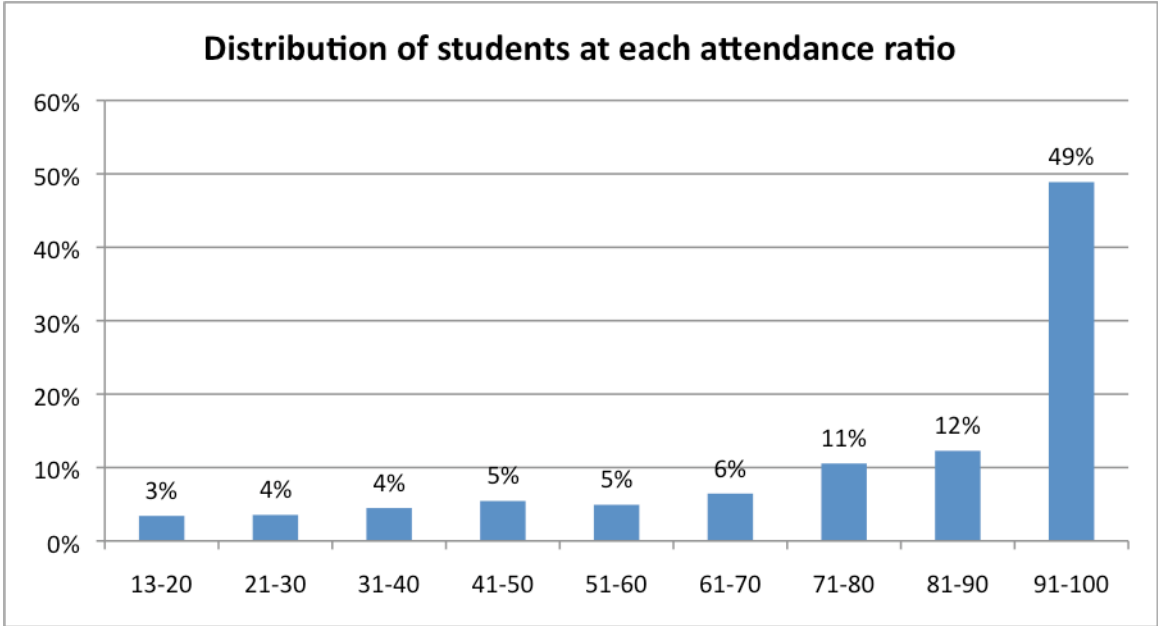
Attendance

The attendance ratio is a measurement that Arts Corps staff devised this year to understand student attendance more precisely. To calculate attendance ratio, the total number of hours for each class is divided by the number of hours each student attended the class. Therefore, a student who attended all possible hours of a class has an attendance ratio of 100%, and a student who attended 2 hours of an 8-hour class has a ratio of 2/8 or 25%.

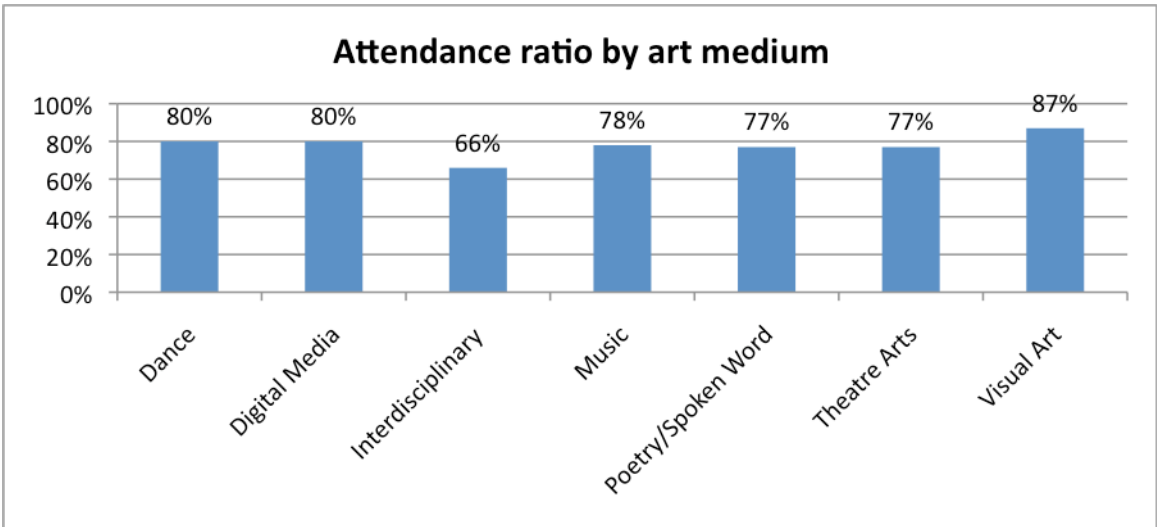
This year, students with an attendance ratio of less than 12.5% were considered “drops” and not counted in the attendance data. Typically, these students attended the first session of a class and did not return.

The average attendance ratio for all students was 80%.

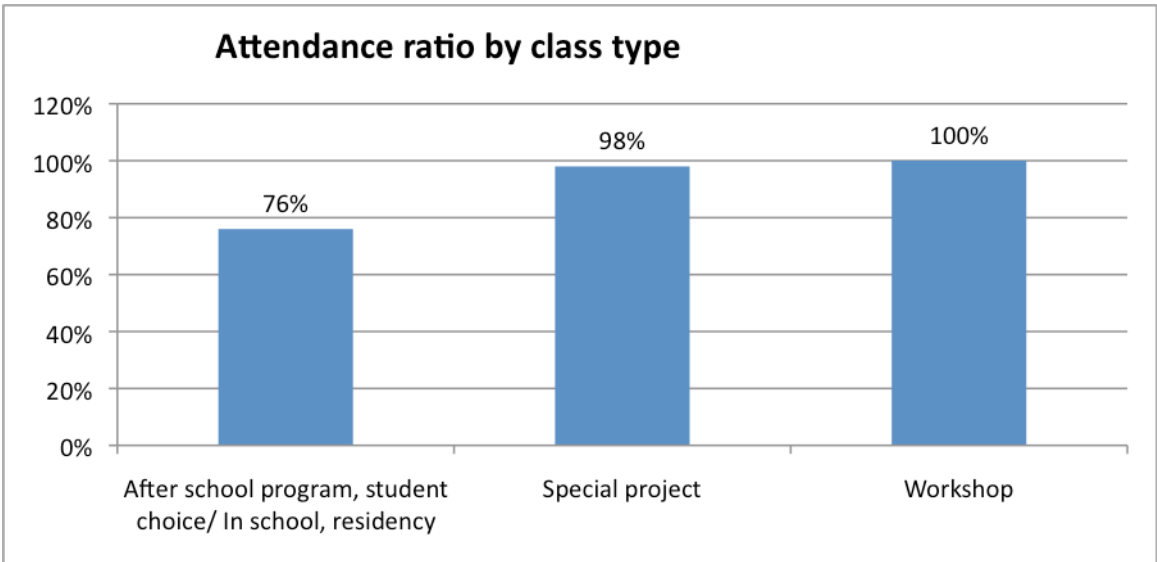
About 43% of all students attended every session (100%) of sessions offered in their Arts Corps class. Half the students attended 87% or more of the sessions offered and three quarters of students attended 60% or more sessions.



The average attendance ratio for each discipline varied slightly, with the highest attendance in visual arts (87%) and the lowest in interdisciplinary classes (66%). Other art disciplines had similar attendance ratios, ranging from 77-80%.

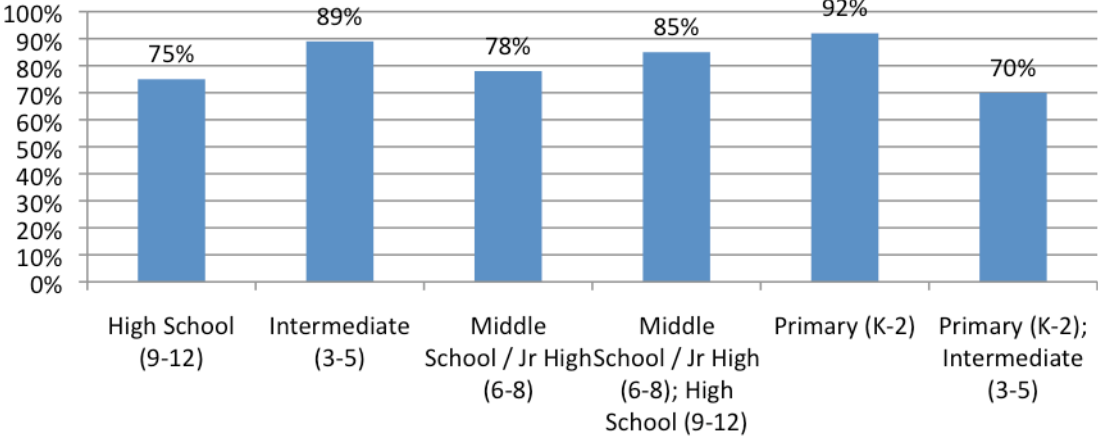


The following graph compares the average attendance ratio of what Arts Corps considers to be their core programming (the in-school residency and after school program) to special projects and workshops. Workshops are often only one session, which is why the attendance ratio is a perfect 100%.



Analysis of the average attendance ratio by grade level served indicates that on average, classes that serve a mixture of primary and intermediate students have the lowest attendance ratio (70%), and classes that just serve primary or intermediate grades have the highest attendance ratios (92% and 89%, respectively).

Attendance ratio by grade level



Indicators of Program Quality

Arts Corps collected data related to program quality from program partners at each class site and from students participating in classes. Partners were interviewed at the conclusion of each class or the end of the year to evaluate the overall effectiveness of teaching artists, program goals, and student demonstrations of the creative habits. Middle and high school students participating in most types of programs and at most sites were asked to complete surveys at the end of their class.

Meeting Partner Expectations

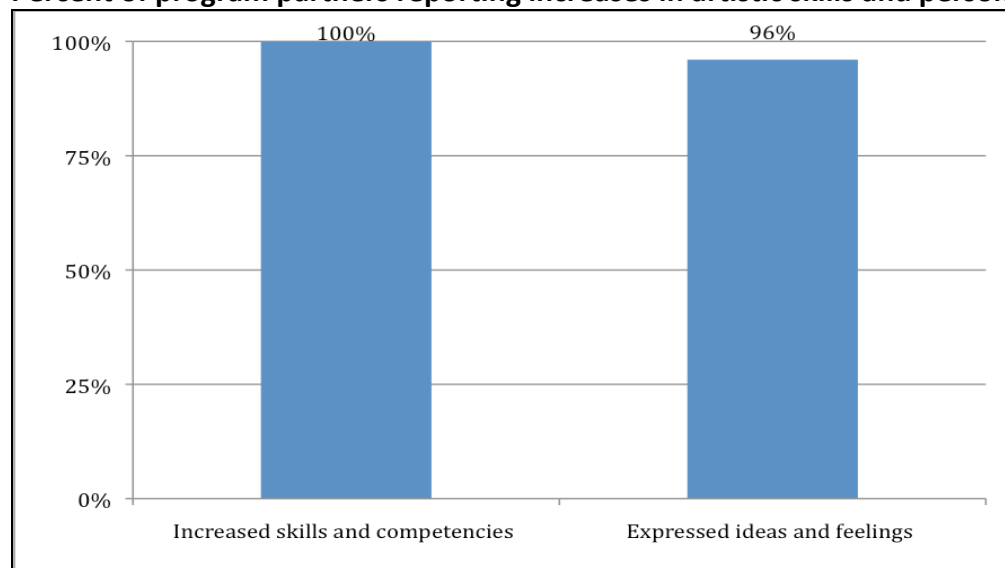
Partners report a high degree of satisfaction with the class(es) held at their site. When asked to rate the overall quality of Arts Corps classes at their facility, 100% of partners who responded to this question indicated that Arts Corps meets or exceeds their expectations.

Partner satisfaction with Arts Corps

Exceeds expectations	62.5%
Meets expectations	37.5%
Needs improvement	0%

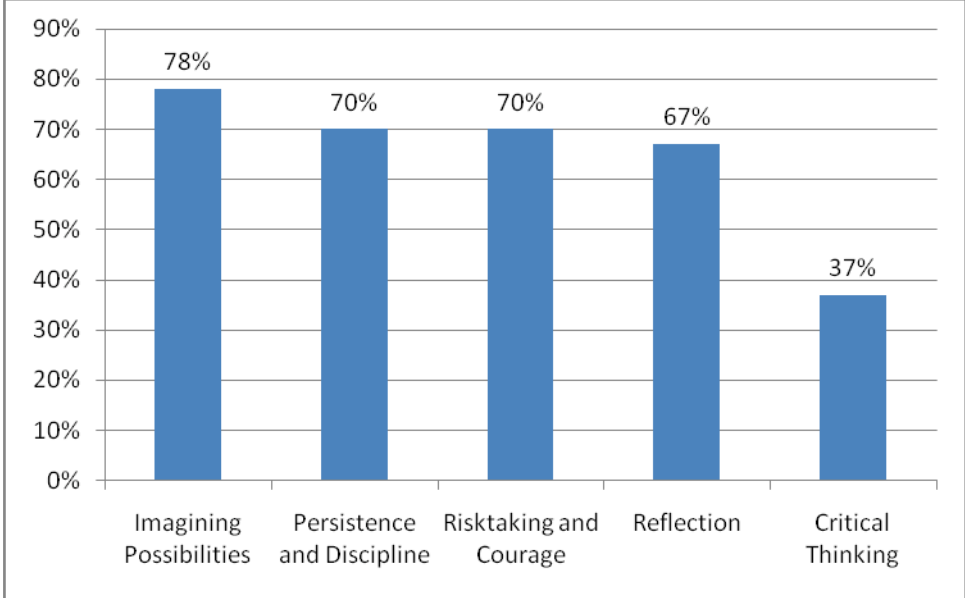
Partners also report that classes are meeting two of the program's major goals: increasing students' skills and competencies related to art, and encouraging students to express their ideas and feelings through art.

Percent of program partners reporting increases in artistic skills and personal expression



A majority of partners indicate that they have observed students demonstrating four of the five habits (imagining possibilities, persistence and discipline, risk-taking and courage, and reflection) more frequently after participating in an Arts Corps class. About a third of partners (37%) reported observing an increase in students’ critical thinking.

Percent of program partners reporting increases in students’ creative habits



Partners were also asked to rate the following positive characteristics of each teaching artist at their site. Partners indicated that they “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the majority of teaching artists demonstrated each of these qualities.

The teaching artist...	% of partners who strongly agree	% of partners who agree	% of partners who disagree
Prepares for class	79%	18%	3%
Arrives on time	55%	42%	3%
Delivers an effective lesson	59%	41%	0%
Engages all students	68%	32%	0%
Handles misbehavior appropriately	61%	36%	3%
Challenges students to learn	74%	26%	0%
Uses teamwork and cooperation	69%	28%	3%
Provides personal attention	67%	29%	4%
Is a role model for students	66%	28%	4%

Many partners described how the teaching artists engaged students in positive ways, including students who did not show interest initially or who struggled during the class:

[The teaching artist] made a point of bringing in reluctant students.

He brings out all of the good in kids and their creative sides - it helps with their self-esteem.

Behavior has improved among students. They opened their minds to another way of thinking and behaving.

She is great at getting the students to reflect on different issues. If a student is struggling, she makes them feel a part of the group and find out what they want to write about it.

Other partners regarded teaching artists as a source of inspiration for both students and themselves:

I am very impressed with how she works with students, [how] she manages to inspire. I often find myself listening in to what she has to say, especially when she is discussing lyrics, and I find myself seeing value in music and words that I had not previously listened to.

[The teaching artist] is not only a talented musician, but has a very special gift working with young people. He inspired teachers as well as students and myself (parent coordinator).

Several partners were impressed with the flexibility that teaching artists demonstrated:

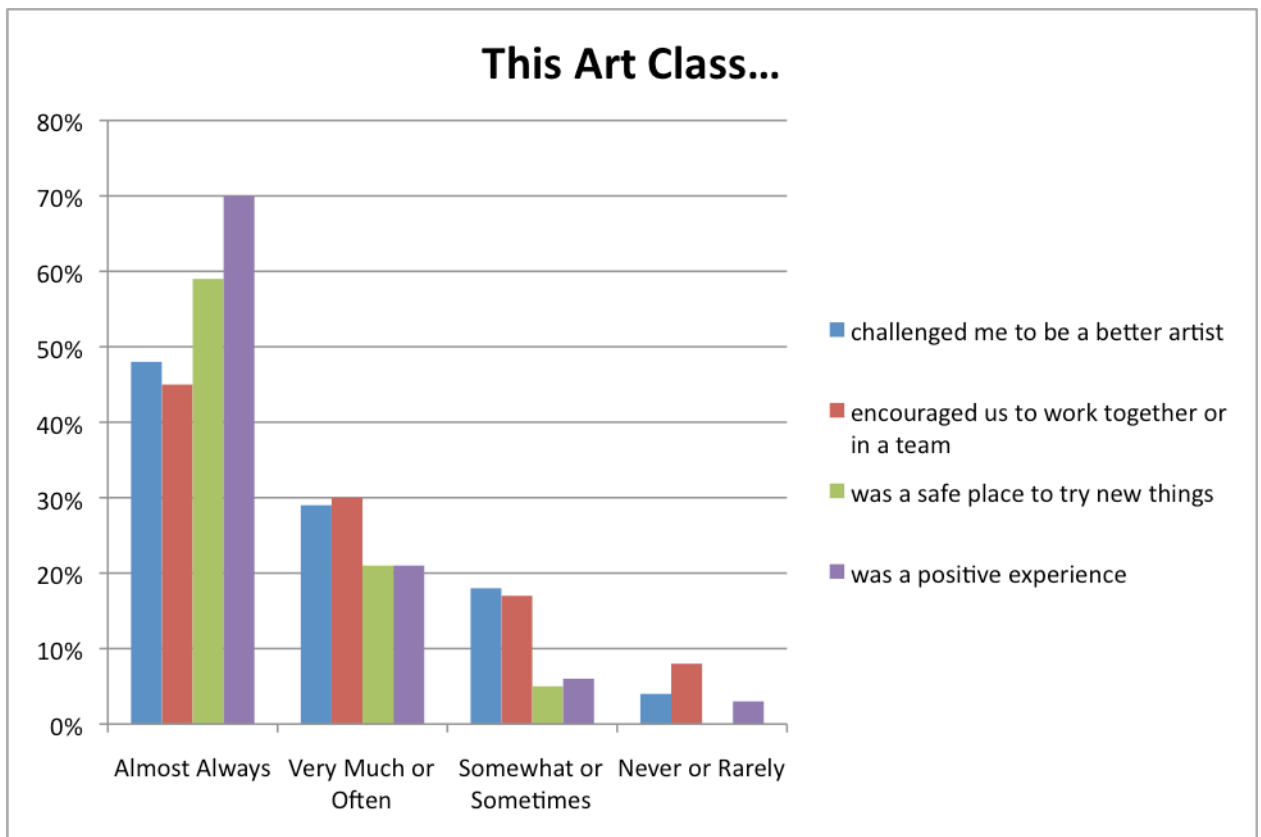
[The teaching artist] was also willing to work around our schedule changes and room changes due to building renovations this year. She brings a lot of enthusiasm to the work, and we hope to have her return.

[The teaching artist] always arrives on time or early and observes the students, then teaches her class based on energy of group. She is a motivator and has a calming effect on students and staff.

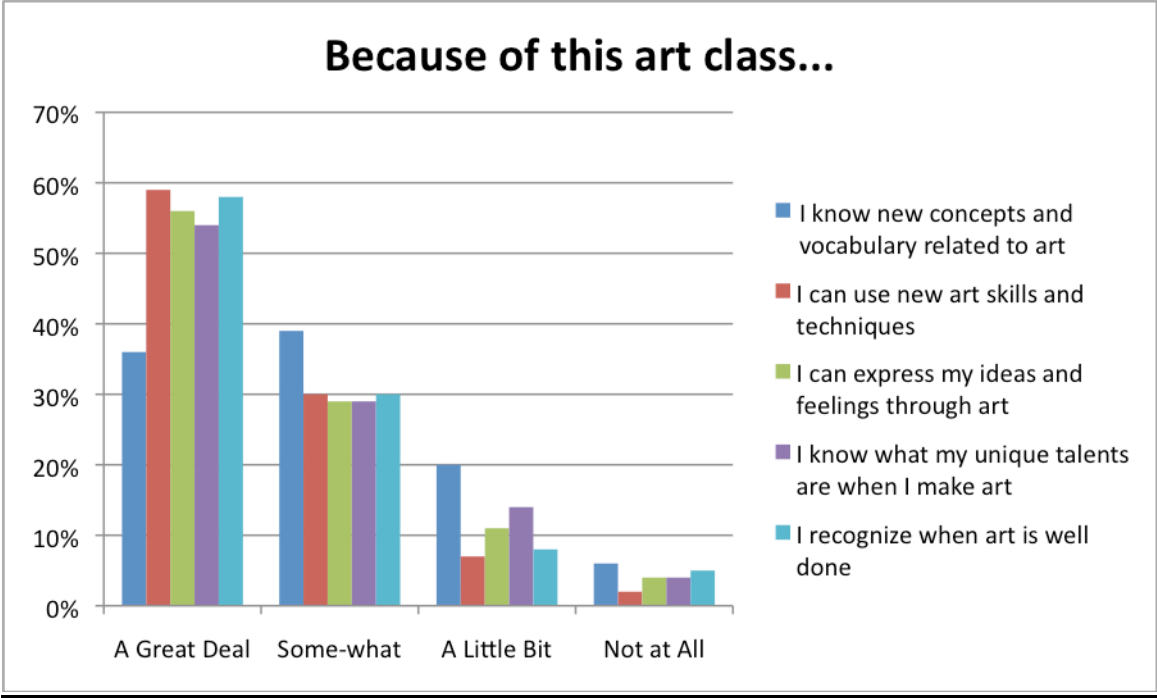
He always arrives prepared and has his class set up before students arrive. He knows how to adjust to the energy of the students. Students have so much fun with theater etc. that class goes over time.

Students

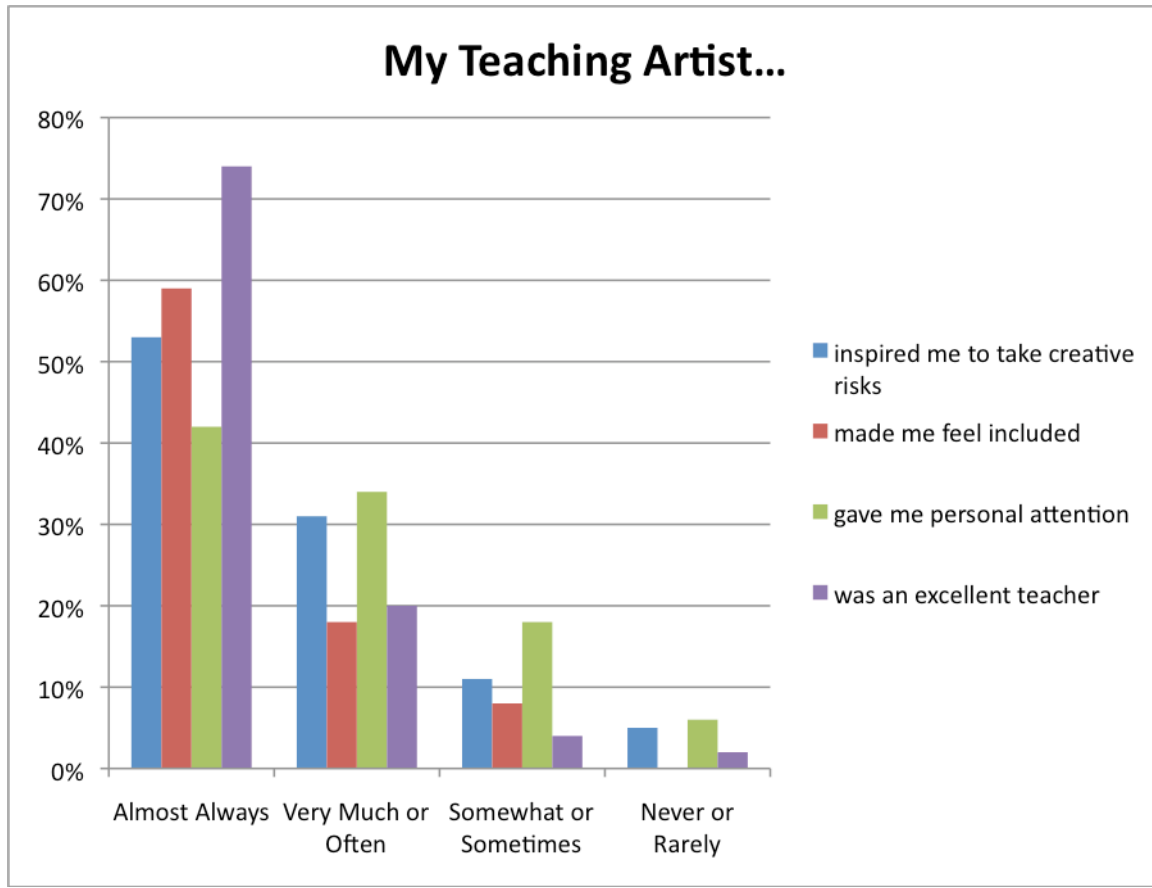
Middle and high school students were asked to complete surveys at the end of each class about their experience. Responses show that over 90% of students report that their Arts Corps class was a positive experience for them. Over 70% of all students said the class challenged them to be a better artist, and over 80% said the class was a safe place to try new things.



About 75% of students reported that they know new concepts and vocabulary related to art as a result of their class, and 89% of students can use new art skills and techniques. Approximately 85% of students said they can express their ideas and feelings through art, and about 88% report they recognize when art is well done.



Students were also asked to evaluate their teaching artist. Over 90% of students said their Arts Corps instructors were excellent teachers. About 80% of students said their teacher inspired them to take creative risks, and over 70% said the teacher made them feel included and gave them personal attention.



Many responses to the survey’s final question, “Is there anything else you want us to know?” reveal students’ deep enthusiasm for Arts Corps. Some examples of responses to this question include:

If I were to recommend a class to take, it'd be this one

The class was fun and I'm always going to sign up for it

I love this art class

It is the funnest after school class

...It rocks and awesome and I don't want it to end

Creative Habits of Mind

The Arts Corps model focuses on five Creative Habits of Mind that have been identified through research as measurable benefits of arts education. They are:

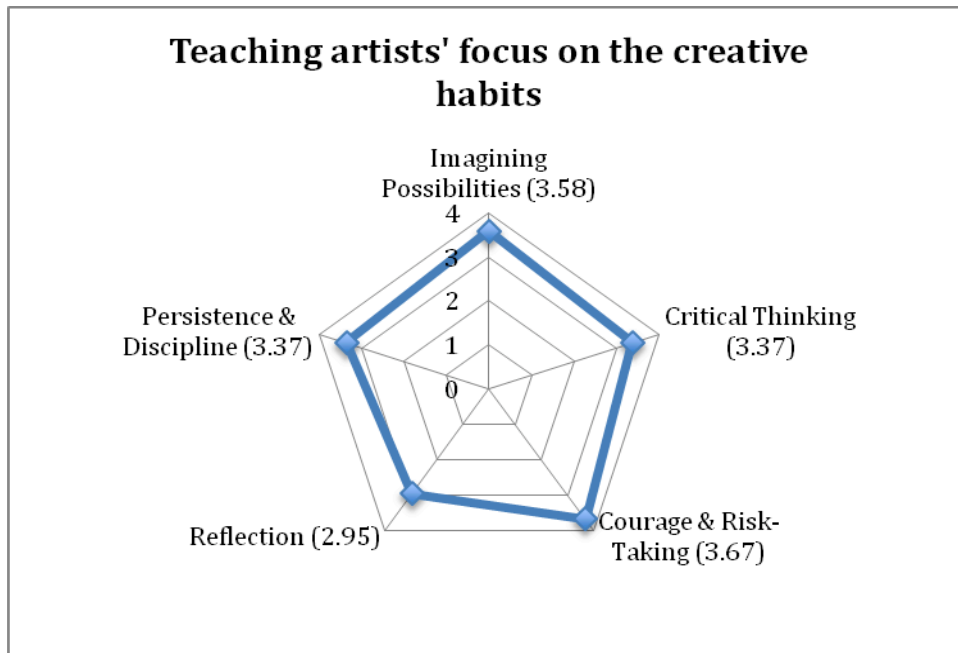
- *Imagining possibilities*: generating new ideas, pursuing a vision
- *Critical thinking*: examining ideas, solving problems creatively, making connections between unlike things
- *Courage and risk-taking*: working outside of comfort zone, tolerating ambiguity, resisting “shoulds” and “oughts”
- *Reflection*: recognizing what is personal and distinctive about themselves and their work
- *Persistence and discipline*: developing mental and physical discipline, concentration, and coordination



Arts Corps instructed teaching artists to distribute student surveys at the end of each class. Student surveys included several open-ended questions, including “What was the most important thing you learned in this class?” and “What did you like best?” Teaching artists were also surveyed and asked to describe the ways that they incorporated each creative habit into their lessons.

Creative Habits in the Classroom

Using a scale of 1 (rarely) to 4 (almost always), teaching artists were asked to describe how often they focused on each of the creative habits in their teaching. On average, teaching artists report focusing on all five habits “often.” Courage and risk-taking is the habit that, on average, teaching artists report focusing on the most, and reflection is the habit teaching artists focus on least.



Qualitative responses from teaching artists, students and partners suggest that Arts Corps classes are consistently successful at including courage and risk-taking, imagining possibilities, and persistence and discipline.

Courage and Risk Taking

Arts Corps defines the habit of courage and risk-taking as the ability to work outside of one's comfort zone, tolerate ambiguity, and resist "shoulds" and "oughts." This was the creative habit most consistently cited by partners, teaching artists and students as important to the Arts Corps experience.

Teaching artists described how courage and risk-taking are an important part of their classroom:

Courage and risk taking seemed to be a natural part of the experience. Just to start to explore design ideas on a blank sheet is a risk to some. I encourage students to use bold marks and fill the page of their drawing, and to not erase. One takes a risk in making a mark they don't like and then must learn to resolve it.

In the high school class, just getting up and reading what you wrote...or telling a story about your self and your family, etc. can be intimidating. But we did it a lot until students gradually felt more comfortable with it.

We worked on partnering and switching around roles, to really challenge each student to try something new within the project, not just whatever they had been willing to do. This was especially effective when two of our main characters were absent and the two "quiet" kids in class successfully stepped into their roles at the last minute.

Elementary students at two sites participated in focus groups at the end of their Arts Corps class. Their comments also reflect an understanding of courage and risk-taking:

You can make a design. Let's say you have a scribble, and you don't have an eraser, you can turn it into lightning bolts.

Artists try lots of new things.

Program partners also described a noticeable increase in students' courage and risk-taking as a result of the Arts Corps class. Examples of program partner comments include:

Students were taking risks - doing things I never, and they never, thought they would do. In particular, the normally shy students took great risks, which was very surprising. They even had the courage to engage in solo work.

After the class, one student seemed to have a much better voice. He used to be shy and didn't say much. Arts Corps really changed him.

After taking this class students are really stepping out of their comfort zones. There is a student ... who says that if she can participate in break dancing, that she also had the confidence to participate in the Polynesian club. She felt accepted. Another young woman said that she doesn't feel judged in a mainly male student class. She now has the confidence to speak to other students that she normally wouldn't speak to. She said, if I can feel accepted in this class, I can be confident elsewhere.

My observation is that students are more willing to try to draw, instead of just saying, "I can't do that," which is what they'd say before this experience.

Risk taking and courage was the creative habit most described by students in their open response to the post-class survey question, "What was the most important thing you learned in this class?" Student responses to this question include:

Don't be scared of trying new things

To try my very best

To take a risk

How to challenge myself more often

Draw whatever you like and don't care about what other people say

Imagining Possibilities

Arts Corps defines the creative habit of imagining possibilities as the ability to generate new ideas or pursue a vision. This habit was also consistently cited by partners, students, and teaching artists as a focal point for the class.

Teachers described how they encouraged this habit in class:

We do several pre-writing practices that involve imagining possibilities. We practice solo and group brainstorming. During freewrites, students are encouraged to go in whatever new direction they are led by each thought.

We would encourage the students to take the same subject and photograph it 15 times differently. The student was forced to think of other angles and points of view. We encouraged students to not simply make art of what they see initially but to imagine different styles and experiment with a variety of options.

One exercise was to do a scribble drawing to music, and when the music stops the participants tried to discover accidental images to flesh out of the scribble.

When asked to describe the most important thing they learned in their Arts Corps class, many students referred to an increased ability to imagine possibilities:

How to trust your imagination

It makes me feel capable of doing things I never thought I could before

Responses in the elementary school focus group also reflected an understanding of this creative habit:

You create something out of thin air and use your body.

My brain is creative, and my ears are, and my tongue is.

Partners also reported increases in students' ability to imagining possibilities. For example:

We have observed several students using their imagination more as a result of being involved in Arts Corps classes. In fact, two of the students have been working on a story together [said] that they wanted to perform for the after school program.

Students realize that they can create music instead of just consume it.

Persistence and Discipline

Arts Corps defines the creative habit of persistence and discipline as the ability to develop mental and physical discipline, concentration, and coordination. Teaching artists described how they encouraged this habit in class:

I try to get students to write for a longer period of time in each session. The ability to focus on writing for longer than 15 minutes takes great discipline. When students want to give up, I encourage them to stay with it.

We chose one group project and focused on creating, developing and rehearsing it all quarter long. It included every single individual in an essential way, allowing the students to see how their work affected everyone else in the group.

I can not stress enough coming to class each week, if Michel Jordan only went to practice once in his life he would of never been good at what he does. If it gets hard, we take a 5-minute break and come back to it. If it feels like my kids are not into the subject, I try and work a different angle that will make the subject a little more interesting.

When asked about the most important thing they learned in their Arts Corps class, some student responses referred to persistence and discipline:

To take your time and to keep on working hard

Elementary students at two sites participated in focus groups at the end of their Arts Corps class. Responses reflected an understanding of this creative habit:

If [artists] mess up they turn it into something different.

It can take artists a very long time to finish a work, an hour or a few years to finish something. Their whole lives.

Partners also reported observing an increase in students' persistence and discipline:

Little kids showed persistence - they learned lots of different skills. One came in during winter quarter - she was shy, almost reluctant to become involved. She persisted with encouragement and developed the skills.

At first the kids weren't interested in doing the drumming class, but [the teaching artist] would tell them that it would help them grow. They tried it out and ended up enjoying it a lot.

One student would always have good ideas, but when met with any kind of challenge would try to abandon the whole idea. I was happy to see his final work at the end of the spring quarter was something he had struggled with but stuck to until its completion.

Critical Thinking

Arts Corps defines the creative habit of critical thinking as the ability to examine ideas, solve problems creatively, and make connections between unlike things. Teaching artists often described the in-class critique of student work as the time when students were encouraged to practice critical thinking:

Almost every class would begin or end with a critique of everyone's work. Students would talk about what they like, what they dislike, what they would do differently with each photograph projected on the screen. Students are taught to be respectful while offering suggestions or praise.

We emphasize (and model) from the beginning that constructive criticism always comes from a place of caring and genuine interest in that artist's learning potential.

Always ask why? Why I am doing this, making this, thinking this, filming this, etc.

Responses in the elementary focus also reflected this creative habit:

[Creative people] do most of the details you can't think of.

[Creativity] means when you've messed up and you don't know how to fix it. You can figure a way out to fix it.

Partners were less likely to offer an example of critical thinking as a demonstrable change in student behavior after at Arts Corps class, although a few did:

They problem-solved with the materials...some of the students you could really see trying to work through it.

Reflection

Arts Corps defines the creative habit of reflection as the ability to recognize what is personal and distinctive about one's self and work. This creative habit was the least cited by teaching artists, partners and students as the most important part of the class. Some teaching artists described how they incorporated reflection:

They keep sketchbooks, which are their own province...they don't need to share this work if they don't wish to, and they can see all their work together which encourages them to make connections between pieces, and to see how they have evolved over time.

At the beginning and end of each class...I try and circle up and check in with each student: what they ate? A good song they heard? How it made them feel? Leading free writes about good memories and or bad ones. Keeping them stimulated with questions of what happened in their day: What did you learn from that? How would you do it differently?

A few teaching artists reported that the framework of the class did not allow for reflection:

We did not have a tremendous amount of reflection in this class. [Students] taking the cameras/photos home...would have allowed time to reflect on the images, but that was not a possibility.

Reflection was cited less often by program partners as the most important impact of Arts Corps on students. One partner offered the following example:

They put a lot of thought into thinking about their particular family aspects in creating the totems.

Expressing Ideas and Feelings through Art

Arts Corps' third major goal is to encourage students to express ideas and feelings in art, or to develop aesthetic sensitivity to artwork and everyday experience.

The majority (96%) of partners agree that Arts Corps classes successfully meet this goal. Partners gave examples of students demonstrating an increased ability in this area after participating in an Arts Corps class:

Kids who were at first reluctant to try, became willing to engage in expressing themselves, sharing their own ideas and feelings through art.

What I thought was successful was the opportunity for students to develop skills in a setting that relates to their success in school but is completely different; an opportunity to express themselves personally and without the limits of an academic setting.

For the most part, we've noticed more students can verbalize why they drew or wrote a picture or story. They can also explain what these pieces mean to them.

Student Responses

About 85% of middle and high students report that because of their Arts Corps class, they can express their ideas and feelings through art.

When asked to describe the most important thing they learned, or the best part of their class, many students' responses corresponded to this goal. Examples of student answers include:

What I learned is that I can be myself no matter what

I learned to express my feelings in front of others

To be safe and creative

I liked the creativity this class promoted, as well as the freedom

It helped me find a part of myself

Fostering Artistic Competencies

Arts Corps' final goal is to foster artistic competencies in students, which includes the ability to:

- Develop concepts and vocabulary relevant to art form;
- Demonstrate, practice and/or experiment with relevant techniques and skills;
- Generate and apply criteria for what makes good work (product); and
- Understand the cultural/historical/ contemporary context of art form and role of artist.

Partner Responses

All partners (100%) interviewed agreed that the Arts Corps classes held at their site were successful in increasing students' artistic competencies. Examples of interview responses include:

Students had no video experience or working with cameras. They learned those skills this year through the class.

I liked the way Bob showed kids how to do the base tone - I liked the way Carla demonstrated slow flowing music - showing here is smooth and here is fast movement - short and tight - then had the kids try it themselves.

Student Responses

About 89% of middle and high school students said that they can use new art skills and techniques "a great deal" or "somewhat" as a result of their Arts Corps class. Many students' responses to the survey question, "What was the most important thing you learned in this class?" corresponded to this goal. Students often cited a concept or skill related to the art form as the most important thing they learned, while others described a more general familiarity with an artistic discipline:

Camera angle is a vital part of a photo

The most important thing I learned was to sing from my stomach and sing loud

How to do more challenging movements

The straightness of lines

To be a better actress

The most important thing I learned was how to draw an easier way

Elementary students' responses in the post-class focus group also reflected an increase in artistic competencies:

A Mandala fills the whole paper and fills a pattern.

[A Mandala] is circle to be held by other circles.

[A Mandala] doesn't have to be a circle.

Dancers listen so they can know what to do.

[Dancers] also watch when [teachers] are explaining, they watch and they know how to do it, so that they can try it out.

Other findings: A sense of community and belonging

While not a stated goal for Arts Corps classes, partners and students consistently report an increased sense of community or belonging.

One partner described a change in the group dynamic:

Also after an Arts Corps class there is more cohesiveness with the group. There is a different energy. The students' attitudes are better. Conversations are more positive and friendly. Energy is lighthearted.

Many students said teamwork or community was the most important thing they had learned in their Arts Corps class. Examples include:

How to work as a team

How to work better with people

To work as a team and include others

Everyone has something to say in their poem

When asked to describe the best thing about their Arts Corps class, many middle and high school students described a sense of belonging:

I get to be welcome

I felt included

The work that we did as a group

I liked that I could learn new things from friends

I liked getting along with others and having fun every time I sing

I liked that it's fun and the energy from everyone is great

Several teaching artists provided detailed examples in which a particular student developed a new sense of identity by becoming part of an artistic community in which each member is valued, and creative habits are emphasized:

One of the students in my video production class...came to the first sessions quiet and non-participatory. He seemed more concerned in impressing his friends with his coolness and aloofness. He was very averse to being on camera, so I asked him to be our camera operator. Slowly he became more involved and I invested in him more

responsibility and trust, while letting him know that the class depended on his being "on it". By the last round of classes, he had transformed into a budding film maker with a good eye and sense of movement, as well as joining in to the class comprehensively, joking, talking and hanging out with all of us.

Another teaching artist described an incident in which a student's behavior inspired a theater lesson focusing on inclusiveness and acceptance:

I had a student in my elementary class...who continuously used the term "gay" as a put-down to other kids. One day, he did it...and the entire class began talking about how it wasn't OK to say that...and how it made them feel. We then did a series of improvs [and] I made them all about bullying. I asked the student who had made the gay remark go first...and the situation I gave him was that he was a new student at school and he was entering the lunchroom, but didn't know anyone, so he didn't know where to sit. He told me he didn't want to do it...because "I don't want to feel that way". That's when I knew he really understood character preparation. He knew he'd have to feel it to perform that well. I encouraged him to try...and he did. And it was a total success. The entire class cheered. So great to see a positive change happen over the course of one class period.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Arts Corps' program evaluation for the 2008-2009 school year shows a wide range of positive results. Evaluation findings indicate that Arts Corps' classes are valued both by program partners and the young people they serve. Across artistic disciplines and in a variety of settings, students are engaged and enthusiastic participants, and program partners report high levels of satisfaction with classes held at their site. At the same time, the evaluation revealed there is room for improvement, particularly in the area of evaluation methodology.

Measuring change: The 2008-2009 evaluation revealed limitations associated with using the matched pair "t" analysis to measure the significance of change for creative habits. Because the number of matched "pre" and "post" surveys was relatively small given the number of youth served, it was difficult to conclusively determine that the sample was representative of the entire program. This was complicated by the fact that students from a single teaching artist comprised one quarter of the total matched surveys, raising questions about whether or not the results reflected the program as a whole. In addition, many of these students were repeat students who had taken the student surveys in prior years and who reported frustration about completing the same set of surveys multiple times.

In an effort to increase data matches overall for this analysis, Arts Corps will be meeting with teaching artists to better understand some of the challenges associated with student survey administration, and also to better understand how some teaching artists successfully integrate student surveys into their classes. In addition, because student surveys are likely not capturing the full experience of repeat students who follow a particular teaching artist for multiple years, Arts Corps plans to conduct exit focus groups for this unique group of students. Arts Corps will also consider using pre-surveys from prior years for repeat students in order to measure change over longer periods. Through these efforts, Arts Corps will refine its ability to evaluate change associated with Arts Corps programming.

Measuring access to programming: Arts Corps relies primarily on student self-reporting and program partner perception to measure the level of students reached who would otherwise not have access to arts learning. In 2007-2008, 15% of middle and high-school students reported that the Arts Corps class they were taking was their very first arts class, whereas only 7% reported it was their first arts class in 2008-2009. Additionally, in 2007-2008, program partners reported that approximately 44% of kids had no other access to arts learning while in 2008-2009, program partners reported that approximately 33% of kids had no other access to arts learning. Because there were few programming differences that would explain this change, for the coming year Arts Corps will better show the link between need and service delivery by graphically mapping offerings to identified areas of need, using research from Seattle Public Schools.

Measuring Quality: Although feedback from program partners and students consistently indicates that Arts Corps delivers high quality arts education experiences, Arts Corps intends to

push the bar further by exploring more site-specific ways to measure the quality of its programming. While program partners consistently report that Arts Corps classes meet or exceed their expectations, strong success in this area indicates an opportunity for Arts Corps to deepen its understanding of the specific needs of partners at each site. Arts Corps will be looking at ways to deepen its understanding by adding pre-survey questions to evaluate its ability to meet specific partner expectations at each site. The process of asking partners to identify specific expectations will also help build the capacity of partner organizations to understand the various ways in which the arts can positively impact their students. In addition, Arts Corps plans to evaluate the impact of class length on student outcomes in order to better understand how the length of student engagement impacts the overall quality of the student experience. Arts Corps will also look at ways to use the existing elementary focus group format to find out more about the quality of the arts learning experience for elementary students.

Finding Common Definition for “Reflection:” Of the five creative habits measured by Arts Corps, reflection was cited least by teaching artists, partners and students as an important part of the arts education experience. This finding is not consistent with the experience of staff, who frequently observe reflection in the classroom, but who don’t agree on the definition and who acknowledge that even teaching artists have different definitions for this habit. Some teaching artists and staff think of reflection as synonymous with contemplation or inner musing; others think of reflection as the consideration of what makes good work; still others think of reflection as the recognition of what is personal and distinctive about oneself and one’s work. For this reason, Arts Corps will be working with teaching artists and partners to find a common definition for the habit of reflection to ensure that we can more accurately identify whether or not Arts Corps’ classes foster this creative habit.

For the coming year, Arts Corps will be working with a graduate student from the Arts Leadership program at Seattle University to review its overall evaluation model and to help implement improvements identified by this evaluation process, including data collection. Because evaluation findings consistently show that Arts Corps’ classes foster a sense of community, this effort will include incorporating the concept of community into its program model for the future. It will also include development of the tools and techniques needed to better measure the full impact of Arts Corps programming, as outlined above. Through these efforts and the dedicated efforts of staff and teaching artists, Arts Corps will continue to take a leadership role in the field of youth arts education by using evaluation as a tool to more precisely and thoroughly understand the impacts of arts classes, and to use this understanding to continually improve its ability to help students realize their full potential through the arts.

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