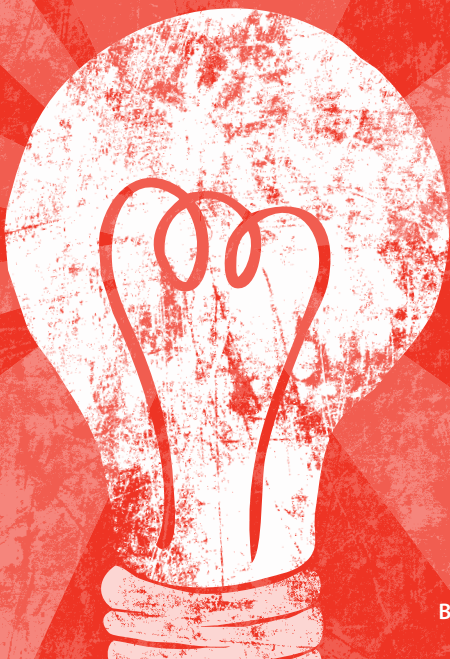


ARTS CORPS 2006-2007

EVALUATION REPORT



By Mary Murray, MEMconsultants SEPTEMBER 2007

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This report reflects the results of an internal evaluation process facilitated by an evaluation consultant. Arts Corps staff worked in partnership with Mary Murray, MEMconsultants, to develop an evaluation plan, design data collection instruments and collect data. MEMconsultants partnered with Matthew Russell, Arts Corps evaluation intern, to conduct data analysis and compile this report. Edits and suggestions on report drafts were provided by Arts Corps staff and are reflected in this report as the consultant deemed appropriate.



INTRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Arts Corps is a nonprofit organization that provides arts education classes in a range of art forms for young people in grades K–12. This year Arts Corps implemented a comprehensive evaluation plan with a focus on two goals: Provide access to quality arts programming and foster creativity among youth participants. Highlights of the findings are as follows.

INCREASING ACCESS TO ARTS PROGRAMMING

- Arts Corps partnered with 37 organizations to provide 172 classes to more than 1,785 young people from July 2006 through June 2007. This represents an increase of 23% from the number of young people served in the previous year.
- Because approximately 35% of students enrolled in two or more Arts Corps classes during this year, there were 2,785 distinct enrollments in quarterly arts classes during this period. The number of distinct enrollments represents a 17% increase over the previous year.
- 35% of middle and high school students report that this was their first art class of any kind.
- Four out of five classes were delivered in communities where between 60% and 100% of youth qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

DELIVERING QUALITY ARTS CLASSES

- 91% of students report that the class was a positive experience often or almost always.
- 94% of student report that their teaching artist was an excellent teacher often or almost always.
- Approximately nine out of 10 participants report meaningful changes in their knowledge of vocabulary, concepts, skills and techniques related to art.
- Approximately nine out of 10 participants credit Arts Corps with increasing their ability to express their ideas and feelings through art.

FOSTERING CREATIVITY

- Student surveys revealed that participation in Arts Corps increases younger students' sense of themselves as creative.
- Structured classroom observations revealed that students practice numerous kinds of creative habits in the classroom. These creative habits are clustered in the following four groups: imagining possibilities, critical thinking, courage & risk-taking and reflection.
- Student pre- and post-class surveys provide evidence that Arts Corps fosters at least three out of four of the specific creative habits: imagining possibilities, critical thinking, and courage & risk-taking. In other words, after Arts Corps participation, students are more likely to report that they practice these specific creative habits. These findings were statistically significant.
- Classroom observations and teaching artist surveys reveal that Arts Corps teaching artists foster creative habits in four ways: in structuring and delivering the lesson, when facilitating classroom discussion, during one-on-one conversation and by modeling creative habits.

ABOUT ARTS CORPS

Arts Corps is a nonprofit arts education program located in Seattle and serving King County. Founded in May 2000, Arts Corps provides arts education classes free of charge to youth, particularly in underserved, low- to middle-income neighborhoods. The program recruits and places experienced teaching artists in a variety of existing in-school and after-school programs, where they provide structured art instruction in a range of art forms for young people in grades K–12.

METHODOLOGY

Arts Corps has been implementing some form of evaluation since its inception in May of 2000. One of the biggest challenges in this evaluation effort is the lack of standard tools for measuring the impact of arts education or tools that are valid in after-school settings that address divergent art mediums and age groups. Consequently, this evaluation has depended on the development and revision of innovative evaluation strategies. Initial efforts began with simple student check-ins and have progressed over the years to the use of a more complex research design, use of a variety of qualitative and quantitative evaluation tools, and collection of data from a wider audience.

In 2005, Arts Corps began collaborating with six other youth arts education organizations as part of a local arts education consortium to jointly strengthen evaluation efforts. Each organization in the consortium received grant funding to develop evaluation tools and to share best practices. This collaborative process contributed to Arts Corps' internal capacity to use evaluation to strengthen its programs and describe program accomplishments and impact.

This year, Arts Corps implemented a comprehensive evaluation plan with a focus on two goals:

1. *Provide access to quality arts programming*
2. *Foster creativity among youth participants*

To assess how well Arts Corps' programming met program goals, students, parents, teaching artists and facility partners all served as sources of data. The following tools were used to collect data.

1. PROGRAM RECORDS REVIEW

Arts Corps maintains records of class length, student enrollment, attendance and teacher-student ratio. In this report, program highlights related to these factors were obtained through reports generated by this internal database. The introduction of a more sophisticated database this year enables program planners to review this data readily and use it to inform program decisions.

2. STUDENT SURVEY

Student surveys were administered in most classes at the beginning of the fall quarter to obtain baseline information, and again when each class completed at the end of the fall, winter or spring quarter. Special projects were not included in this aspect of the evaluation. Through the use of a tracking identifier (that nonetheless allows for confidential responses), student surveys were matched so that pre-post analysis could be conducted to identify student changes that take place during participation in Arts Corps. These surveys were used to assess classroom and teaching artist characteristics, learning as a result of class participation and self-perception of personal creativity.

Although the same topics were addressed with all age groups, the surveys given to elementary-age students were less complex than those given to middle and high school students. Further, surveys completed by students less than age eight are excluded from analysis, as many of these young people do not have a sufficient grasp of the written language to complete the survey reliably.

A total of 198 valid pre-class surveys were collected in the fall, representing a response rate of approximately 38%. A total of 538 valid post-class surveys were collected; approximately 55% of eligible students completed a post-class survey. All program accomplishments based on student reports were gathered from these surveys.

3. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

A qualitative classroom observation tool was piloted, revised and implemented. Five observers, including program staff, the evaluation consultant and a research assistant, made repeated observations in seven classes during the year and recorded observations using this tool. The observation team met to share results and further refined the coding scheme for recording classroom activities more accurately. Qualitative descriptions of how creativity is fostered by teaching artists and how creative habits are practiced by students are based in part on the data from these observations.

4. PARENT SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP

Parents completed a survey (conducted via a one-on-one interview) at Arts Corps' two end-of-year student showcases. Questions addressed Arts Corps' success towards the goal of fostering creativity. Fifty-four parents completed the survey. A small group of parents participated in a focus group to provide more in-depth information on the same topic. Qualitative descriptions of how creativity is fostered by teaching artists and how creative habits are practiced by students are based in part on the data from this survey and focus group.

5. TEACHING ARTIST SURVEY

Teaching artists were encouraged to complete an online survey at the end of the school year, and 60% did so. Questions addressed classroom practices, program goals and attitudes toward the program, and responses contribute to the descriptions of how creativity is fostered among youth participants.

6. FACILITY PARTNER SURVEY

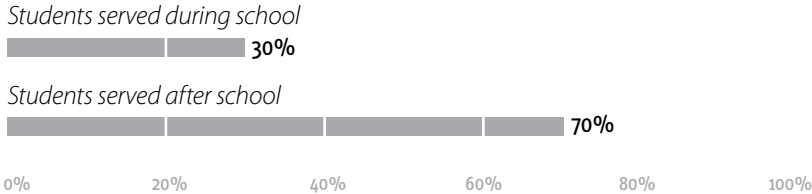
Facility partners were encouraged to complete an online survey at the end of the year, and 26% did so. Questions addressed the two program goals and attitudes toward the program itself, and responses contribute to descriptions of how Arts Corps increases access to arts education and fostered creativity among youth participants.

GOAL 1: PROVIDE ACCESS TO QUALITY ARTS PROGRAMMING

Arts Corps is founded on the position that substantive access to the arts is critical for healthy development. Young people need to experience the arts in as many ways as possible — not only as an audience member, but also as an art maker. There is ample evidence that parents agree. Parents who have the resources consistently expose their children to the arts: They bring their children to performances at the children’s theater, enroll their children in music lessons or photography classes, send their children to summer camps where pottery or painting is a part of the daily activities or enroll their children in schools where arts are integrated into the core curriculum and offered as electives.

Arts Corps hires professional teaching artists to provide structured art instruction free of charge to youth in a variety of settings in King County including community centers, youth organizations and public or parochial schools (called facility partners) in primarily underserved, low- to middle-income neighborhoods. Art classes in subjects including dance, music, theater, poetry and visual arts are held in existing in-school and after-school programs.

IN-SCHOOL AND AFTER-SCHOOL CLASS BREAKDOWN



INCREASING ACCESS TO ARTS PROGRAMMING

Quality arts classes typically require financial and time resources that not all families have. Arts Corps sets out to remedy this unequal access to arts education by providing free arts classes for those young people who would otherwise not have the opportunity. Arts Corps also aims to provide arts classes at locations and times where young people can most easily participate.

ARTS CORPS EFFECTIVELY REACHES AS MANY YOUTH FOR AS MUCH TIME AS POSSIBLE.

- Arts Corps classes are offered during fall, winter and spring quarters, with limited programming offered during the summer.
- During the 2006–2007 year, Arts Corps partnered with 37 organizations to provide 172 classes to more than 1,785 young people from July 2006 through June 2007.¹ This represents an increase of 23% from the number of young people served in the previous year.
- Because approximately 35% of students enrolled in two or more Arts Corps classes during this year, there were 2,785 distinct enrollments in quarterly arts classes during this period. This represents a 17% increase over the previous year.
- In all Arts Corps programs, 82% attended at least half of the class sessions in a quarter, and 67% of youth attended at least three out of four classes. This attendance is consistent with previous years; in 2005–2006, 81% of students participating in after-school programs attended at least half of the classes.

MANY ARTS CORPS STUDENTS WOULD NOT OTHERWISE HAVE ACCESS TO ARTS CLASSES.

- When selecting facility partners, Arts Corps prioritizes those that serve low-income or otherwise underserved populations. This year, four out of five classes were delivered at partner facilities where between 60% and 100% youth served qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, an indicator of family financial need and the rate of poverty in the community.
- 63% of facility partners report that Arts Corps provides the only arts education opportunity for most or all students served.
- 35% of middle and high school students who began an Arts Corps class in the fall report that it is their first art class of any kind, and 60% report it is their first class in that particular art form.

DELIVERING QUALITY ARTS CLASSES

Arts Corps measures itself against best practices in arts education and in youth development programming. Attention has been focused on the following class characteristics as indicators of quality: length and frequency of classes, personal attention, opportunities for small group work, fostering of competencies and student satisfaction.

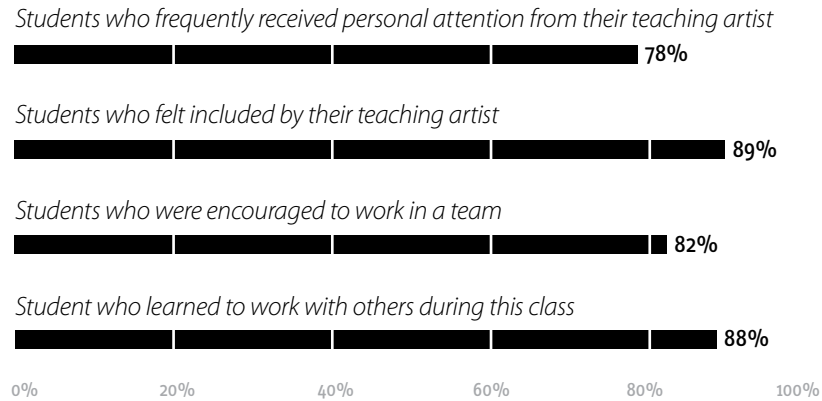
CLASS SCHEDULES ALLOW SUFFICIENT TIME FOR FULL ENGAGEMENT IN ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES.

- The typical after-school class met twice a week for seven to nine weeks for a total of 16 class hours per quarter (usually 60- or 90-minute classes). The typical in-school class met for a total of 12 hours per quarter because classes tend to be shorter.
- Most classes were offered two or three quarters in a row, allowing for continuous engagement over much or all of the school year. Forty-five percent of classes were offered for three quarters; 23% of classes were offered for two quarters; 32% of classes were offered for one quarter only. This is consistent with (and slightly better than) the opportunities for continuous engagement in previous years: in 2005–2006, the break down was 42%, 17% and 41%, respectively.

CLASSES PROVIDE PERSONAL ATTENTION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMALL GROUP WORK.

- Class sizes are limited, typically from eight to 24 students depending on the subject area, setting and age group. This limited class size has been consistent over time; the typical range in 2005–2006 was seven to 25.
- The median ratio of teaching artists to students was 1:13. In addition, 58% of classes also had at least one teaching assistant, greatly increasing opportunities for personal attention.

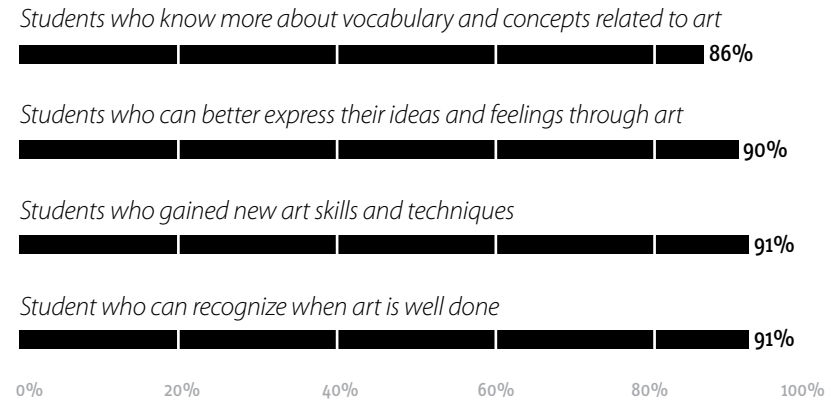
¹ A "class" is defined as one quarter of programming. In many instances, the same teacher remained in the same setting for three quarters in a row, in effect, delivering one yearlong class; however, for the sake of consistency in accounting and reporting, such a circumstance is counted as three distinct quarterly classes.



- Student surveys provided opportunities for youth to rate aspects of the class, detailed in the table above. They also were given the opportunity to comment on what was best about the class. Some of these comments address personal attention and small group work. Examples are as follows.
 - *"The teacher actually helps you improve instead of just passing you up and going to the next steps."* (Visual Art, female, age 10)
 - *"I liked 1-on-1 attention best."* (Dance, male, 13)
 - *"This class was different because I felt like I was included in all activities and made me feel confident in myself."* (Theatre, female, 11)

ARTS CORPS CLASSES BUILD ARTISTIC COMPETENCIES.

- 79% of students report they were challenged to be a better artist in their Arts Corps class.
- Student surveys provided opportunities for youth to rate artistic skills and competencies gained in Arts Corps classes, detailed in the following table. They also were given opportunities to comment on what was best about the class. Some of these comments address learning about art. Examples are as follows.
 - *"We are trying to be real artists."* (Visual Art, male, age 11)
 - *"It is a great experience to have, it is something that betters you physically and mentally."* (Hip Hop Dance, female, age 15)
 - *"I liked the learning environment best."* (Break Dancing, male, age 16)



STUDENTS ARE SATISFIED WITH ARTS CORPS CLASSES.

- Most students participate in Arts Corps classes by choice. Student satisfaction is an important indicator of the quality and success of a class.
- 91% of students report that the class was a positive experience often or almost always. This is consistent with past evaluations: In 2005–2006, 92% of older students reported that the class was a positive experience.
- 94% of students report that their teaching artist was an excellent teacher often or almost always. This is an improvement over past evaluations: In 2005–2006, 89% of older students reported that their teaching artist was an excellent teacher.
- Students also were given the opportunity to comment on what was best about the class. Some of these comments reveal student enjoyment of the classes. Examples are below.
 - *"We do fun games. I feel happy here. I want to go here."* (Theatre, female, age 8)
 - *"I would recommend this program to everyone!"* (Visual Art, female, age 9)
 - *"This class is a wonderful class with wonderful teachers that teach us acting."* (Theatre, female, age 10)



GOAL 2: FOSTERING CREATIVITY AMONG YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

Arts Corps asserts, and many agree, that fostering creativity among youth participants is of great value to individual youth and society as a whole. The practice of creativity is considered fundamental to developing cognitive skills and improving academic performance; creative habits are necessary skills for a competitive, 21st century workforce; studies have shown that the arts have attracted failing students back into school engagement, in part because they are inspired by the opportunities for creative expression.² Arts Corps believes that creativity, or creative practices, are closely aligned with *habits of mind*. Habits of mind are defined as “dispositions displayed by intelligent people in response to problems, dilemmas or enigmas, the resolutions of which are not immediately apparent,” and are supported by educational research.³

Arts Corps is founded on the belief that everyone has the ability to be creative, and that creativity can be nurtured or developed. Arts Corps offers a wide variety of arts classes delivered in a diversity of settings by uniquely talented teaching artists. What is common among all of them is the practice of offering classroom activities and creating a classroom culture that encourages the practice of creative habits among youth participants.

² *Critical links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development*. Richard J. Deasy, Ed. Arts Education Partnership, 2002.

Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning, Edward B. Fiske, Ed. Arts Education Partnership and the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, 1999.

The Impact of Arts Education on Workforce Preparation. Issue Brief. National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices, 2002.

³ *Discovering and Exploring Habits of Mind*. Costa, Arthur L. and Bena Kallick, Eds. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2000.

IDENTIFYING CREATIVE HABITS THROUGH CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Arts Corps began this year with a detailed working definition of creativity based on a review of psychological and educational research, as well as a reflection on organizational values.⁴ This definition formed the basis of an observation tool created and utilized to document what creative habits or practices youth demonstrate in Arts Corps classes and how teaching artists contribute to those practices. The following table presents the model of creativity as expressed through behaviors and habits that resulted from these observations.

CREATIVE HABITS DEMONSTRATED IN ARTS CORPS CLASSES.

1. Imagining Possibilities

- *generating a large number of ideas: fluency (quantity)*
- *generating new, unusual or original ideas/approaches (quality)*
- *adding details and expanding ideas: elaboration (building on)*
- *speculating or predicting, then testing ideas*
- *demonstrating flexible thinking or changing point of view (willingness to pull a 180)*

3. Courage & Risk-taking

- *taking risks or acting in the face of apprehension*
- *persisting or demonstrating discipline when things are not yet working*
- *engaging in fantasy and imagination openly*
- *experiencing the unknown willingly; tolerating ambiguity*

2. Critical Thinking

- *examining ideas methodically: analyzing (no judgment)*
- *revising, refining, building up or strengthening ideas*
- *redefining, sorting or synthesizing ideas; seeing relationships*
- *evaluating or appraising ideas (judgment)*
- *making connections between unlike things, drawing parallels, thinking metaphorically*

4. Reflection

- *demonstrating self-direction; resisting "shoulds" and "oughts"*
- *showing initiative and ownership in problem-solving*
- *engaging in introspection or reflective thinking*
- *reflecting on own goals and progress; self-evaluation*

MULTIPLE DATA SOURCES SUGGEST THAT ARTS CORPS FOSTERS CREATIVE HABITS

The following sections describe in more detail the following results.

- Teaching artists intentionally foster creativity in consistent ways, as recorded through structured observations.
- Facility partners observed student engagement in creative practices; in fact, most report that the creative habits youth practiced exceeded their expectations.
- Parents report that Arts Corps helps foster creativity in general, and the following clusters of creative habits: critical thinking, courage & risk-taking and reflection.
- Student report that they are more creative because of their Arts Corps participation, and that their teaching artist fostered creativity.
- Changes in students' self-assessment between the beginning and end of their Arts Corps class reveal changes in self-perception related to creativity in general, imagining possibilities, critical thinking and courage & risk-taking. In other words, students are more likely to describe themselves as a person who is creative or regularly practices creative habits after they participate in Arts Corps.

TEACHING ARTISTS INTENTIONALLY FOSTER CREATIVE HABITS.

Arts Corps' teaching artists are professional artists who are experienced teachers. Arts Corps recruits, selects and provides training and ongoing professional development for its teaching artists. Eighty-nine percent of teaching artists report that fostering creativity is their biggest priority or something they are extremely focused on when leading Arts Corps classes.

⁴ Sources that have informed this definition of creativity include the following:

Assessing Creativity: A Guide for Educators. The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, December 2002.

Discovering and Exploring Habits of Mind. Costa, Arthur L. and Bena Kallick, Eds. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2000.

Maslow, A. H. *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature.* Penguin Books, 1971.

MacKinnon, D. W. *In Search of Human Effectiveness: Identifying and Developing Creativity.* Creative Education Foundation, 1978.

Classroom observations revealed four different ways that teaching artists foster creative habits.

- *Delivering the lesson:* Often, teaching artists intentionally structure lessons to evoke and practice the use of creative habits.
- *Facilitating classroom discussion:* Teaching artists question students and allow for classroom conversation that helps develop creative habits.
- *One-on-one conversation:* Teaching artists utilize one-on-one time with students to encourage certain creative habits.
- *Modeling habits:* Teaching artists model creative habits within Arts Corps classes.

FACILITY PARTNERS AGREE: ARTS CORPS FOSTERS CREATIVITY.

Facility partners are schools, community centers, after-school programs and other youth-serving organizations. At each site, Arts Corps establishes one primary contact that regularly observes the program and is one of the first on site to know about program challenges or successes. These contacts are often an after-school coordinator, PTSA representative, classroom teacher, principal or site coordinator. All facility partners who completed a survey agreed that students in Arts Corps classes engaged in creative activities on many occasions; 43% indicated that the amount of engagement in creative activities exceeded their expectations.

Facility partners were asked to describe any links observed between what students learn in Arts Corps and what they do in other parts of their lives. Here are two examples of comments provided anonymously in response to that question:

- "The students gain a sense of confidence in the classes and therefore that shines through in their work and at times I think in their personal lives as well. These students learn to think through art and therefore can think in different ways in the classroom as well."
- "Definitely in terms of the persistence; if you do not get something done correctly the first time, it is easy to give up. But with Arts Corps, teachers give the students positive reinforcement and allow them to try again or use a different tool/idea to create their object or outcome."

PARENTS CONCUR: ARTS CORPS FOSTERS CREATIVITY.

Parents were surveyed about their child's participation in Arts Corps and asked why arts classes are important for their child. Additionally, three parents participated in an in-depth focus group to further explore their responses. Four themes emerged from these conversations.

- *Creativity in general:* Parents spontaneously used the word *creativity* in their responses. For example:
 - *Arts classes are very important for my child because...*
 - "...it allows her to experience and develop creativity."
 - "...creative skills are so important in the work place."
- *Critical thinking:* Parents reveal that they are interested in the kind of intellectual growth that occurs in an arts class. Many are concerned that classroom learning is not encompassing well-rounded education, while others believe classroom performance will be enhanced by the skills learned in arts classes.
 - *Arts classes are very important for my child because...*
 - "...arts are part of a well-rounded education, especially the performing arts that get out of a static classroom environment."
 - "...research shows that kids involved in arts score higher and do better academically."
- *Courage & risk-taking:* Parents indicate that arts classes sometimes push their child beyond their comfort zone, and that this is a good thing.
 - *Arts classes are very important for my child because...*
 - "...they provide opportunities to express themselves that might be uncomfortable and push them."
- *Reflection:* Parents indicate that arts classes give students the opportunity to better know and express themselves. They cite learning about their feelings, their interests and their talents.
 - *Arts classes are very important for my child because...*
 - "...they help support their learning more about themselves."
 - "... letting the kids express how they feel, even if they're not feeling well, is important. "

STUDENTS REPORT: ARTS CORPS FOSTERS CREATIVITY.

At the end of each class, students completed a survey on which they reported what they learned or experienced in the class.

- 89% agreed a great deal or somewhat that they are more creative because of the class.
- 87% reported that their teaching artist inspired them to take creative risks almost always or often.
- While only some use the word *creativity*, many students described a creative habit when asked what they learned in the class:
 - *"This class taught me about being creative with my work and knowing what I'm doing."* (Visual Art, male, age 8)
 - *"This class lets you be free!"* (Dance, male, age 9)
 - *"It made me feel comfortable, to try new things without being laughed at."* (Visual Art, female, age 10)
 - *"I learned to take a chance."* (Spoken Word/Multimedia, female, age 12)
 - *"Confidence and how to go out and show off and be proud of what I do."* (Dance, male, age 14)
 - *"To be yourself no matter what anybody else thinks."* (Spoken Word/Poetry, male, age 15)
 - *"I learned to take criticism positively."* (Dance, female, age 15)
 - *"To not be afraid to speak out."* (Choir, female, age 17)
 - *"To draw art in your own perspective."* (Visual Art, female, age 13)

CHANGES IN SELF-PERCEPTION SUGGEST THAT ARTS CORPS FOSTERS CREATIVE HABITS.

This year, Arts Corps endeavored to measure student perceptions at the beginning of the year and again at the end of their class, and to match student pre- and post-surveys allowing for more sophisticated statistical analysis than anonymous surveys that are not matched. Pairs of pre- and post-surveys were collected from 41 elementary school students and 25 from middle and high school students. Promising findings emerged from this data.

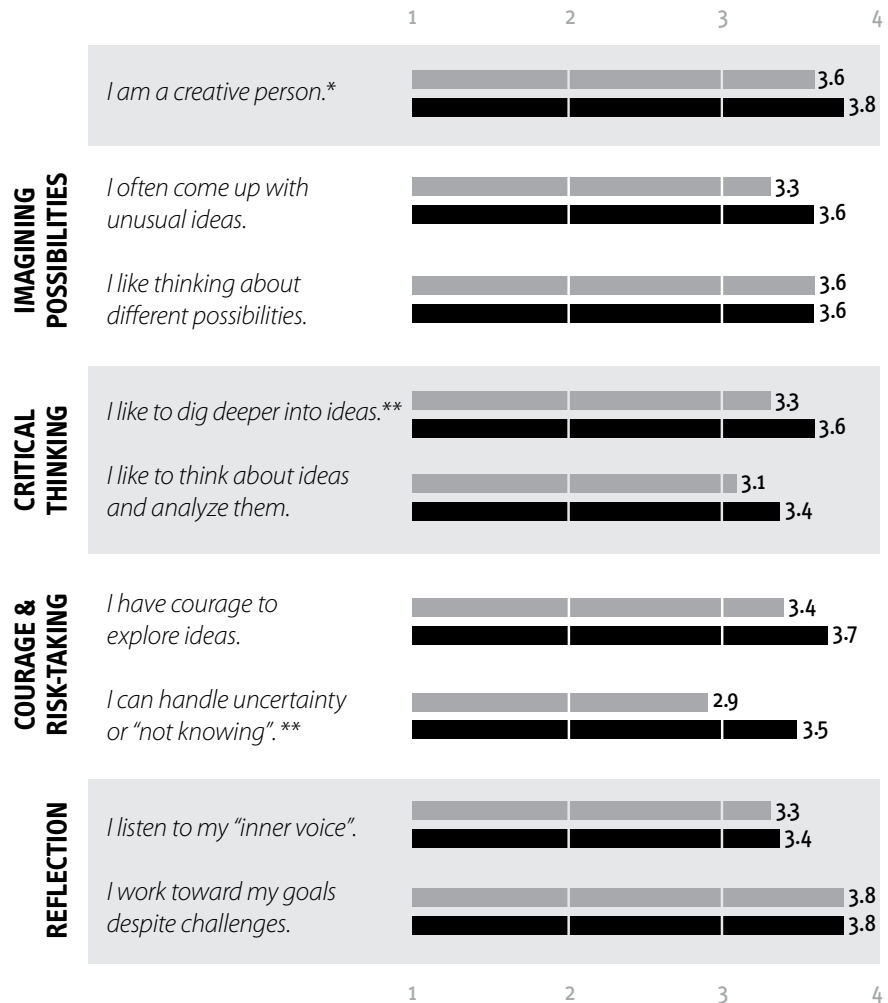
Students were presented nine statements assessing aspects of creativity consistent with Arts Corps' definition and were asked to rate the degree to which the statement described them. (See following tables for details.)

- For seven of nine statements, student agreement increased after participation in elementary school Arts Corps classes.
 - *In two instances, the change in self-assessment between pre- and post-test is statistically significant, suggesting that Arts Corps fosters critical thinking and courage & risk-taking.*
 - *In a third instance, there is a trend towards statistical significance suggesting that Arts Corps increases youths' sense of themselves as a creative person.*
- For six of the nine statements, agreement increased after participation in middle and high school Arts Corps classes.
 - *In one instance, the change in self-assessment between pre- and post-test is statistically significant, suggesting that Arts Corps fosters imagining possibilities.*

CHANGES IN CREATIVE HABITS: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

before class
 after class

1. This does not describe me at all. 3. This describes me somewhat.
 2. This describes me a little bit. 4. This describes me exactly.

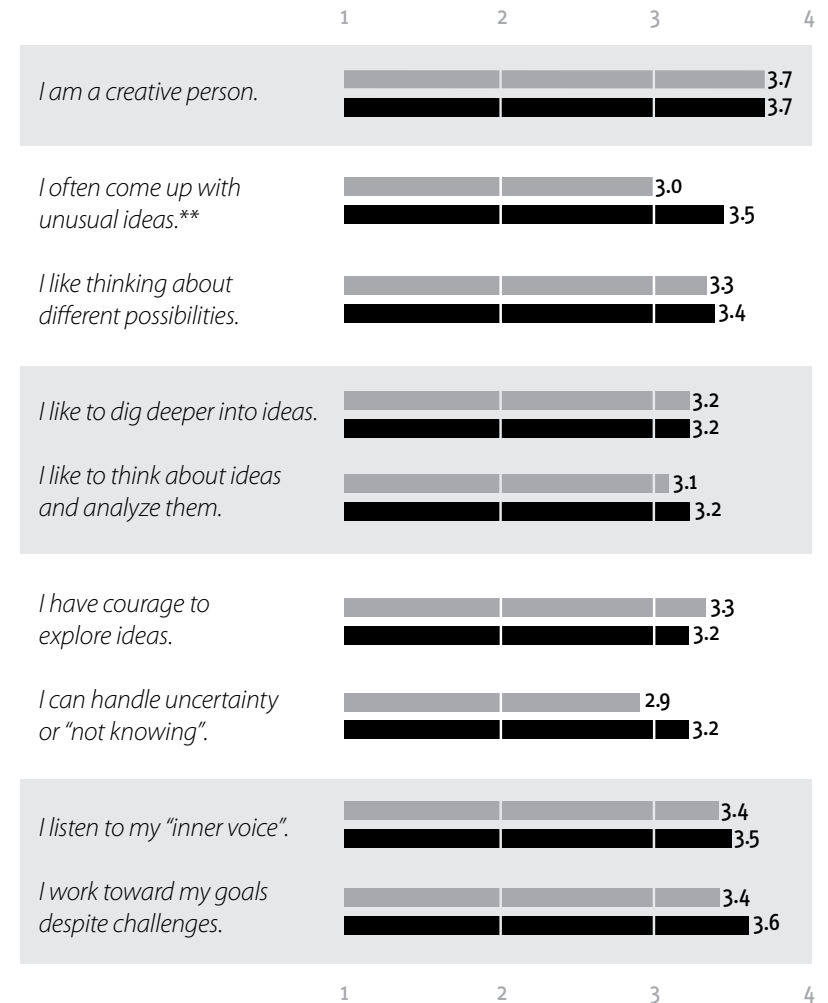


** indicates a statistically significant difference. * indicates a trend.

CHANGES IN CREATIVE HABITS: MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL

before class
 after class

1. This does not describe me at all. 3. This describes me somewhat.
 2. This describes me a little bit. 4. This describes me exactly.



** indicates a statistically significant difference. * indicates a trend.

Paired sample t-tests were used to determine the probability that the difference between each pre-survey mean and the post-survey mean was caused by chances (rather than caused by Arts Corps classes, as hypothesized). It is customary to say that if the significance level is less than .05, that difference is "statistically significant," or likely not caused by chance. If the probability is more than .05 but less than .10, it is customary to say there is a "trend" suggesting a difference between the two means that is likely not caused by chance. A complete presentation of the results of these analyses is available upon request.



CONCLUSIONS & LOOKING AHEAD

THE EVALUATION PROVIDES MULTIPLE SOURCES OF EVIDENCE THAT ARTS CORPS ACHIEVES ITS GOAL OF FOSTERING CREATIVITY.

- For the first time, Arts Corps has collected matched pre- and post-class data in order to assess changes in student self-perception related to creativity. Moreover, statistically significant differences were found, providing evidence of meaningful changes in relation to creativity in general and in imagining possibilities, critical thinking and courage & risk-taking.
- Structured classroom observations, parent surveys and focus group, facility partner surveys and teaching artist surveys provide further evidence that the changes detected in the surveys are attributable to Arts Corps participation.
- In the next year, it will be important to replicate these findings to further understand and validate them.

THE EVALUATION PROVIDES EVIDENCE THAT ARTS CORPS CONSISTENTLY INCREASES OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE IN ARTS EDUCATION FOR YOUTH WHO OTHERWISE WOULD NOT HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY.

- Thirty-five percent of middle and high school students reported that this was their first art class of any kind. And, this year, Arts Corps served 23% more young people than in the previous year and had a 17% increase in quarterly enrollments.
- For the next year, it is important to maintain these trends and continue to increase enrollment without sacrificing class quality.

THE EVALUATION PROVIDES EVIDENCE THAT ARTS CORPS ACHIEVES ITS GOAL OF PROVIDING QUALITY ARTS EDUCATION.

- Consistent with previous years, this year's evaluation offers evidence that Arts Corps classes provide personal attention and opportunities for small group work, foster artistic competencies and are appreciated by students.

- Dosage, or the typical length and frequency of student participation, has been consistently measured over time. In the next year, it would be useful to determine Arts Corps' goals in this area and track programming against these internal benchmarks of success.
- The classroom observation tool is a potentially powerful tool to observe, support and develop teaching artists. Over the next year, this and other potential applications should be explored.

ARTS CORPS IMPROVES ITS EVALUATION DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION EACH YEAR, AND THIS EVALUATION REFLECTS THE CULMINATION OF MANY YEARS OF LEARNING, PLANNING AND PILOTING.

- The introduction of matched pre- and post-surveys that measure creativity provides more convincing data than the post-class only surveys of the past.
- The development of a structured observation tool allows for the collection of qualitative data that is meaningful and focused on program goals.
- The introduction of a more sophisticated database increases Arts Corps' ability to track attendance and other indicators of student engagement; reports that produce data by class can now be produced.

THERE ARE CLEAR NEXT STEPS FOR CONTINUING TO IMPROVE THE EVALUATION PROCESS.

- Arts Corps continues to explore its understanding of creativity and creative habits. Evaluation instruments should continue to evolve to reflect Arts Corps' organizational and programmatic goals and theories of change. For example, measures this year were designed around a four-pronged definition of creativity and classroom observations helped confirm what each of these four cluster of habits include. And now, program managers have begun to hypothesize that a fifth creative habit, persistence & discipline, should emerge as an equally important aspect of what Arts Corps fosters.

- The survey might not be the most valid way of assessing attitudinal changes among younger elementary school students, who not only have limited reading ability, but also are not always developmentally able to reflect on their own knowledge, skills or attitudes. Arts Corps should reflect on this data collection instrument and consider revisions for the next year.
- Over the next year, it will be important to increase the number of student surveys collected to increase confidence in the interpretation of that data. Although approximately 520 students participated in Arts Corps' regular classes during the fall quarter, only 198 valid and fully completed pre-surveys were collected. In addition, only 66 matched pre- and post-surveys were collected (13% of the sample). Thus, surveys in this analysis may not be representative of the group of youth participants.

Challenges with data collection are common among organizations whose primary mission is to deliver youth programs rather than to conduct research or evaluation. These challenges are compounded when programs are delivered at many sites, and when there are not dedicated evaluation staff managing the process. Other factors make it difficult for Arts Corps to guarantee timely, accurate and complete survey administration: weather cancellations, student absences, committed teaching artists who prioritize educational activities over evaluation, youth who misunderstand instructions, etcetera. However, lessons learned from this year's challenges can inform action planning for next year's survey administration, and the sample size can be increased.

- It is also important to increase response rates of teaching artist and facility surveys. This is an achievable task and would strengthen the validity of those survey data interpretations.

- In the next year, it will be important to take advantage of information collated by the database to produce reports that can inform program managers of areas where the program needs to be strengthened. For example, attendance is an indicator of student engagement; timely tracking of attendance can help program managers identify a problem mid-year, rather than waiting until the end of the year to learn of challenges that need to be addressed. Also, reports can be generated that provide teaching artists and facility partners specific information about their classes to foster reflection on potential class improvements.

ARTS CORPS AND ITS STAKEHOLDERS MUST TOLERATE IMPERFECTION AND AMBIGUITY IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS.

- Arts Corps has taken a capacity-building approach to evaluation. Staff manages much of the evaluation process while seeking the advice and contributions of a variety of research and evaluation experts and colleagues. This approach has many benefits: It increases staff knowledge about and engagement in the evaluation process, it helps ensure that evaluation will continue if funds for consultants are not available, and it creates and supports an organizational culture that values self-reflection and organizational learning. Capacity-building approaches, however, are not necessarily efficient and require tolerance for the kinds of challenges that non-evaluators face when they play a meaningful role in an evaluation process.
- Arts Corps endeavors to provide powerful learning experiences that cause each student's "world to shift on its axis." Its goals and strategies are not limited by what is tangible or quantifiable; even expert researchers and evaluators struggle to develop valid ways of measuring the kinds of changes Arts Corps sets out to make. Program evaluation will likely always be limited in its ability to comprehensively document the innovative programming that Arts Corps values and aspires to consistently deliver.

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