

Executive Summary

Program Evaluation DC Arts and Humanities Education Collaborative First Year Report

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This past school year we began a program evaluation of the DC Arts and Humanities Collaborative Pilot School Program. Our principal objective was to investigate the development of teachers' understanding and implementation of arts integration practices. We also sought to gather participants' perspectives in order to provide formative recommendations to the DC Collaborative. Data collection methods included (1) observation of the DC Collaborative Summer Institute; (2) observations of professional development workshops, including visits to museums and schools; (3) site visits to participating schools, (3) interviews with teachers and artists, and (4) teacher surveys after the Summer Institute, each professional development workshop, and at the end of the school year.

Teacher Participation and Development

- Teachers reported that they learned new skills at integrating the arts within their individual teaching contexts. They gained a greater appreciation of the arts and an understanding of how their children would benefit. They viewed arts integration as an opportunity for professional growth and collaboration.
- Teachers valued the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers, develop their curriculum, and learn to teach specific arts integrated activities.
- Some teachers were already implementing arts integrated instruction before their involvement with the program. The arts and self-expression were a central part of their teaching. These teachers greatly appreciated the programs' resources, such as funding, supplies and visiting artists. They tended to have a clear sense of what they wanted from their integrated units, the artists and the workshops.
- For other teachers, arts integration was a new experience. These teachers were appreciative of the professional development offerings and wanted more artists' visits.

Student Development

- Although we did not formally assess student learning, we asked teachers to describe what their students had learned through the program. In interviews, teachers reported that students improved their learning in various academic subjects, had improved retention, expressive skills, self-confidence and better relationships with other students.

Positive Beginnings

- The DC Collaborative was successful at engaging teachers and supporting arts integration in the schools. Many teachers developed an understanding of the potential within arts integrated instruction.
- Teachers were generally excited about the program. They felt that the program supported the type of teaching that they most want to do. They sometimes spoke of professional “renewal” and a sense of “energy.”
- Teachers greatly appreciated the funding allotted to each school for artists and materials. It enabled well-organized teachers to implement their planned arts integrated units. The increased availability of resources – funding, materials and artists – was viewed as one of the most valuable aspects of the program.
- Most schools encouraged collaborative planning through common planning times and opportunities for teachers to discuss units with specialists.
- Liaisons and consultants from the DC Collaborative successfully supported teachers’ efforts in the schools.

Recommendations

- Revisit and clarify the overarching goal of the project, and ensure that it is clearly communicated to participants. This will make it easier for participating teachers and administrators to gather support in their schools. Each school team should also clarify their individual goals and focus, and be able to identify how their activities fit into an overall plan.
- Expectations and outcomes should be clarified with the participants and connected to the overall vision and focus of the program. Expectations and outcomes do not have to constrain imaginative site-based plans for teaching. Instead, they should set the parameters within which the imagination of the teachers can flourish in concert with the artists. The means to reaching the outcomes can be open-ended and encourage open-mindedness, but should specify what the arts integrated classroom would look like, sound like, and how it will be organized, managed and developed.
- Reorganize professional development activities during the 2006-07 school year to be more site specific, and more oriented towards individual schools’ needs and plans.
- Provide professional development for artists on classroom management, pedagogy and aspects of child development. Continue to appropriately match the artists and schools, based on artists’ abilities and experience, and the schools’ needs and programming.
- Identify master teachers already successful at arts integration and use them as mentor teachers or team leaders. Encourage inter-visitations among participating schools so participants can learn about each others’ needs, abilities, and accomplishments. Use site-based professional development to differentiate support for each school.