SUSTAINING ARTS-INFUSED EDUCATION

A Study of Teacher Change and Principal Leadership

Summary of Findings 2006–2010
Research shows that more meaningful learning takes place when the arts are infused into the teaching of core subjects. Personally creating dialogue and acting out parts of a favorite book, or personally choreographing a dance to communicate symmetry creates emotional connection with what is being learned. When content becomes personally relevant to students, it drives interest and engagement. The arts build confident learners with a measure of creativity and self-awareness invaluable in school and in life.*

Teacher training and principal training are two of the most important factors in establishing and sustaining quality arts education in schools. The Arts Education Department of the Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) and ArtsEd Washington share the mission of increasing quality arts education for all students through professional development and training.

In 2006, the two organizations launched Arts Impact/Arts Leadership, a U.S. Department of Education funded project to study the impact of long-term, intensive teacher and principal professional development in support of arts-infused teaching and learning. PSESD’s Arts Impact was implemented both in tandem with ArtsEd Washington’s Principals’ Arts Leadership (PAL) program and independently to investigate teacher, student and school-level outcomes.


“Thanks for making this learning such a useful tool. I am so honored to have participated and feel like I am ARMED with the best skills to be a better teacher...thank you...thank you...thank you!”

—Teacher at Larchmont Elementary School

ARTS IMPACT/ARTS LEADERSHIP: INFUSING ART INTO EDUCATION
The Arts Education Department of Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD)—Arts Impact

Arts Impact began in 1999 under the umbrella of the Cultural Council of Greater Tacoma. It joined PSESD in 2002. This successful two-year teacher-training model is based on best practices for professional development, builds personal artistic confidence and fosters sustainable changes in teaching practice. Teachers begin as learners, experiencing the lessons they will take back to students. Artist Mentors then visit classrooms to model arts-infused instruction and help teachers tailor their lessons to their unique group of students and classroom environment. Once teachers feel confident, they teach arts-infused lessons with their mentor present and then graduate to teaching independently.

The ongoing feedback and encouragement from mentors and peers—an essential aspect of Arts Impact—cultivates a supportive community, making sustainable professional growth possible. At the end of the two-year program, teachers have the knowledge and skills to infuse visual and performing arts as a routine part of classroom education while meeting school and state standards.

ArtsEd Washington—Principals’ Arts Leadership (PAL)

ArtsEd Washington created the Principals’ Arts Leadership program in 2004 with the goal of creating a more systemic approach to arts teaching and learning. Recognizing the school principal as the instructional leader in the arts, PAL helps principals become the catalytic spark for school-wide arts education that is powerful and sustainable.

PAL offers two years of support, providing principals with the leadership skills and tools to create an ongoing plan for arts education. The program empowers principals in their instructional leadership role to effectively guide the expectations of teachers as the arts plan is developed and implemented. A school-wide Arts Team, composed of the principal, teachers and staff, crafts the School Arts Plan. Each plan includes school-specific opportunities for growth and pathways for the school to offer high-quality arts instruction to their students using existing and new resources.

Two innovative arts education organizations partnered seeking to maximize their individual impacts and test a model for integrating and sustaining standards-based arts education in elementary schools. Implemented together, Arts Impact and the Principals’ Arts Leadership program provide a systemic approach resulting in a sustained increase of quality arts education.

“A CREATIVE PARTNERSHIP TO SUSTAIN QUALITY ARTS EDUCATION

“There is joy back in the classroom. Teachers are energized and excited about teaching again. They are not as weighed down.”

—Principal of Larchmont Elementary School, Tacoma School District
A FOUR-YEAR COMPARATIVE STUDY

The intent of the project was to compare outcomes around student learning, teacher practice and principal leadership across three groups of schools. The design was quasi experimental with two treatment groups and one control group.

Nine participating schools from Tacoma and Bethel school districts were randomly assigned to one of three study groups and met two basic criteria:

- More than 35% of the student body qualified for free or reduced-price lunches.
- 3rd, 4th and 5th grade teachers and leaders were willing to participate.

**Project Goals**

- Strengthen standards-based arts instruction in the elementary school grades through principal training, school-based planning, development of school arts teams and sustainable infrastructure
- Improve the academic performance of elementary students.
- Improve teacher knowledge and practice to teach arts-infused concepts.
- Replicate the Arts Impact/Arts Leadership model locally and disseminate at state, regional and national levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Group A Schools: Arts Impact/PAL</th>
<th>Group B Schools: Arts Impact only</th>
<th>Group C Schools: Control</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>Project capacity building year. Selected schools, gathered baseline data, developed curriculum, finalized evaluation tools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>PAL</td>
<td>Arts Impact</td>
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<td>2006-07</td>
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<td>Principals, teachers and students in 3rd, 4th and 5th grades</td>
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<td>2007-08</td>
<td>School Arts Teams established; School Arts Plans begun; School Arts Inventory baseline data gathered.</td>
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Arts Impact is a comprehensive professional development program that combines hands-on learning of art skills and knowledge; training in concept-based learning, performance-based assessment, and processes for responding to art and performances; and classroom coaching and mentoring. Teachers receive 51 hours of professional development each year for two years.

**ARTS IMPACT TRAINING COMPONENTS**

102 HOURS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ARTS EDUCATION

**10-12 Supplemental Workshops**

Teachers expand arts knowledge throughout the year. Teachers attend, at minimum, two of these three-hour workshops expanding on basic arts knowledge and skills, building on what is learned in the Summer Institute.

**Professional Learning Communities**

Teachers experience community. Twice a year, teachers come together as a group to share learning and teaching strategies and identify practices that sustain arts integration. In many cases, they continue building this community on their own.

**Cultural Study Trips**

Each teacher takes their class to a museum exhibition and a dance or theater performance specifically designed for student audiences. Teachers learn how to apply what children are learning in the classroom to discussions about the exhibit or performance. Teachers are encouraged to lead cultural study trips with their students after training.

**30-Hour Summer Institute**

Teachers learn by doing. They participate in dance, theater and visual arts lessons, which they take directly back to the classroom to use with their students.

**11 Hours of Classroom Mentorship**

Teachers are coached. Teachers are paired with an Artist-Mentor who guides them in teaching arts-infused lessons effectively and independently.

**PRINCIPALS’ ARTS LEADERSHIP COMPONENTS**

PAL helps schools put the following five components in place over a three-year period, creating a foundation for successful school-wide arts education.

**The Principal**

Principals’ support for arts education is essential. PAL positions the principal as the program’s key advocate and supports his or her role as the school’s instructional leader in the arts. On-site coaching from peer coaches, usually PAL alumni, helps cement this leadership role and provides access to insights and guidance from principals who are succeeding in making the arts a core part of instruction.

**The Arts Team**

Leadership is dynamic and shared. Each school establishes an Arts Team that includes teachers and community members (parents, artists, business and civic leaders) working with the principal. The team is recruited at the beginning of the PAL program and participates alongside the principal in planning workshops. Together they learn about key components of a sustainable arts program, how to access state and local resources and tools and other topics. The Arts Team drives activities and broader school engagement in support of the School Arts Plan, helping secure sustainability for the work.

**The School Arts Plan**

Schools need a pathway for change. The School Arts Plan lays out a vision and the expectations of the school, for both the leadership and the staff, formally positioning the arts as a core content area in the school’s curriculum. Target areas within the plan include curriculum, instruction and assessment; teacher professional development and capacity building; and community engagement. During the first year of the PAL program, schools complete a baseline School Arts Inventory identifying the school’s position on the continuum of arts education and providing a starting place for the vision and planning process. Completing the inventory annually serves to provide a progress report capturing changes, strengths and challenges and informing the annual School Arts Plan revision.

**Seed Money**

Small investments have impact. Upon completion of the Arts Plan, ArtsEd Washington provides each school with $1,000 to implement elements of the plan that will increase school capacity to teach the arts and lead to sustainability. Relatively small investments can motivate action, enhance access to training and strengthen accountability.

**Peer Networks**

Principals need to talk to each other. ArtsEd Washington conducts peer forums as a way to enable principals to gather together as a group to learn about best practices and connect with other principals who are on the same path. The peer networks formed offer a venue to share ideas and renew energy and commitment.
**ONE TEACHER’S PATH TO MAKING AN IMPACT WITH ART**

In 2006–07, Shelby O’Conner was in her first year of teaching 4th grade at Larchmont Elementary School. When she heard the principal had applied to be a part of the Arts Impact/Arts Leadership program, she and the other teachers were blindly supportive of the idea. “We had no clue.” Once the Arts Impact training began in the fall of 2007, her teaching life began to change.

Shelby knew she would learn how to teach writing and math through art, but she imagined drawings of stick figures. She did not expect that theater and dance would become central to many of her lessons. “Who knew to bring theater into writing?” She found that acting out a story and then writing about it created new meaning for the visual learners who struggled to write—and she saw their writing improve. Dancing out vocabulary words and math concepts like angles and parallel lines has allowed her to reach a whole new set of students. “This type of learning provides success for all kids, especially those that struggle. It’s learning, and they’re having fun!”

Arts Impact has been a transformative experience for both Shelby and her students. One of her struggling students was in and out of foster care, and expressed anger and a lack of confidence. Once Shelby began infusing art into her lessons, he blossomed and began to hit all the learning criteria. One day during a math lesson incorporating visual art, he drew an intricate architectural drawing, showing a great skill that no one would have discovered without Arts Impact lessons. “He has peace and success. Those are the moments where I think, ‘How could I survive without Arts Impact?’ It has been a life changing experience.”

Shelby appreciates the mentors who came to the classroom to coach her. “They gave themselves and were so willing to help us infuse the arts in a way that worked for us individually. They had the art part and we had the standards part. And we found a way to bring them together.” Today, her kids are dancing, acting and drawing their way to math and writing success.

“**PROMISING TRENDS SHOW ENHANCED TEACHER AND STUDENT LEARNING**

Measuring impacts of professional development in the educational environment requires a diverse set of approaches. PSESD and ArtsEd Washington used a range of quantitative and qualitative research tools throughout the study to assess the impacts of their programs—from surveys and interviews to criteria-based performance assessments of teachers and students.

The outcomes showed real progress toward meeting the project’s goals. The results indicate that Arts Impact and PAL are not only building the teaching capacity of educators but also enhancing student learning. Following are the study’s key findings:

**Arts Impact successfully trains educators to teach the arts.**

- Teachers in Group A and B schools demonstrated they were able to sustain arts teaching independently. Teachers reported an average of 44.6 hours of arts-infused teaching in their class during the school year while being coached by their Artist-Mentor. In the last year of the study, although Artist-Mentors did not enter the classroom, teachers reported spending nearly the equivalent time on arts-infused lessons—43.2 hours.
- Learning assessments from the Summer Institutes show that teachers learned arts concepts successfully and understood them in the same way their instructors did.
- Learning assessments from the Summer Institutes show that teachers learned arts concepts successfully and understood them in the same way their instructors did.
- Teachers reported that Artist-Mentors provided invaluable and influential coaching as they worked to incorporate arts as a regular element of classroom teaching.
Professional development in the arts can improve teaching in all subject areas.

Teacher improvement was measured in two ways:

Autonomy Rubric for Teachers (A.R.T.)—Used by Arts Impact since 2002, this analytic rubric is a tool for measuring levels of teacher performance. Eight different areas are evaluated, including instructional, assessment and evaluation strategies. Artist-Mentors observe and score teachers in their ability to teach arts-infused lessons on their own without help from the Artist-Mentor. A scale of 1 to 4 is used, with each point on the scale correlating to specific skills or activities observed, and where a 1 or 2 means a teacher is developing skills and a 3 or 4 means they are proficient in those specific skills or activities. The highest level of teaching is equivalent to a 4. This evaluation took place multiple times during the course of the study.

The STAR Protocol®—The Star Protocol is a framework in which Powerful Teaching and Learning are composed of five essential elements: skills, knowledge, thinking, applications and relationships. Participating teachers and students were observed during non-Arts Impact lessons and rated on the presence of the five elements on a scale of 0 (not observable) to 4 (clearly observable). An overall category synthesizes all the essential elements to indicate how well the observed lesson aligns with Powerful Teaching and Learning.

Outcomes of these two evaluation tools indicate the Arts Impact professional development model improves teaching across all disciplines. Results of the A.R.T. showed significant teacher growth between the first and second years of training. The project objective was for 80% of teachers to be proficient—scoring a 3 or 4 on the rubric—in all eight areas. In the first year, this objective was met in only two of the eight areas. In the second year, the objective was met in all eight areas. (See Chart 1)

These outcomes were corroborated by those of the STAR Protocol evaluation, which showed that by the end of the project Arts Impact teachers were 8-20 percentage points higher than control teachers in all essential elements of Powerful Teaching and Learning. In the overall category, Arts Impact teachers scored 20 percent higher than control teachers. (See Chart 2)

Learning through the arts can enhance student learning of math and writing concepts.

Students learned math and writing concepts in two ways—through an art form and through traditional math or writing assignments. For example, students working on parallel and perpendicular lines would first learn the traditional math definition, then identify parallel and perpendicular lines in a work of art, followed by creating a work of art that used parallel and perpendicular lines. This was often followed by another math worksheet on parallel and perpendicular lines. Each lesson resulted in an artwork, theater or dance performance.

Each student’s work was assessed using specific criteria that, if met, demonstrated the student’s understanding of the concepts in the lesson. Across all lessons, grade levels and disciplines, 85% of the students in Group A and B schools met between 80% and 100% of the targeted criteria, showing they understood and demonstrated the criteria in their artwork and performances. (See Chart 3) To place this in a familiar context, 85% of students received an A or B on each lesson, a level of achievement that any teacher would be proud of. The formative nature of performance-based assessments, as used in this study, does not allow for a direct comparison of their results to student results on state mandated year-end tests, which are summative, testing all content learned in an entire year. Performance-based assessments are ongoing, day-to-day measures of what a child knows and is able to do that provides a clear picture of real student achievement to both the student and the teacher.
Arts leadership in the PAL program takes place in four critical stages of development and implementation.

PAL was at an early stage of development at the outset of this study. While the program had a clear framework for implementation, directors were open to making enhancements along the way. A mid-stream evaluation looking at how arts leadership unfolds in PAL schools identified four distinct stages of leadership development and program implementation. This finding was unexpected and a pleasant surprise, as it informed updates to the program and now provides a framework for evaluation. It is also an excellent diagnostic tool that can be used to assess preparedness and tailor the PAL program to schools’ individual needs.

- **Stage 1: Catalytic Spark**—PAL takes root more effectively where the spark of personal passion for the arts or a pedagogical belief in arts as an effective learning tool exists among school leadership.

- **Stage 2: Dynamic Shared Leadership**—Principals and key teachers create an Arts Team that plays an active role in encouraging interest and building participation within the school community. Successful principals provide vision, participate in goal setting, model by participating in arts activities and offer flexibility to teachers.

- **Stage 3: Effective Systems and Tools**—A range of systems and tools, including professional development, are required to enhance arts skills and teaching capacity and encourage participation. Professional development focused on technical teaching skills and lesson plan development is fundamental to a school’s success.

- **Stage 4: Sustainability**—School-wide cultural change must take place for arts-infused education to continue beyond the principal’s tenure. Broad engagement of teachers and staff in planning and arts-infused lesson development appears to encourage this kind of transformation.

**PAL contributes to the sustainability of arts education.**

The PAL program was assessed using a qualitative exit survey tracking achievement in four areas:

- Dynamic Shared Leadership
- Effective Systems and Tools
- Sustainability
- Arts Integration

Group A, B and C schools all participated in the survey, with Group A demonstrating higher achievement trends in the four areas. The survey outcomes and trends indicated that PAL:

- Successfully assists schools in creating the tools and systems that expand arts teaching skills and knowledge
- Enhances teacher engagement and school-wide arts programming
- Helps principals and teachers build the infrastructure necessary for arts-infused education
- Catalyzes school-wide cultural change necessary for sustainable arts programming

Additionally, the multi-year School Arts Plan created by each Group A school was incorporated into overall school plans and submitted to the school district. This formality contributes to the sustainability of arts education by holding schools accountable.

“I didn’t know how to look for congruent shapes. But after Ms. Meredith came, I could spot out congruent shapes. I didn’t get the meaning of the word symmetry—after Ms. Debbie came I now understand the word symmetry.”

—4th grade student
The trends emerging from this study suggest further research will be valuable. Project outcomes offer direction on program implementation and reinforce prior studies showing that more meaningful learning can take place through arts education.

**Principals matter.**

Previous studies have shown that principals set the climate and expectations in their schools, and their support for arts education is essential to its integration in the classroom. This study reinforces the important role of the school principal. When they receive leadership training and other professional development, the environment for arts education improves. Their leadership supports the work of teachers learning to infuse arts into classroom instruction and leads to sustainable arts education.

**A collaboratively developed Arts Plan helps schools keep their focus.**

An Arts Plan keeps the arts visible and dynamic for a school. It is a valuable tool to engage teachers and staff and to create buy in, setting the groundwork for culture change that will sustain arts education once the principal moves on.

**Arts-infused instruction gives teachers a new tool to reach students.**

Arts-infused instruction gives teachers new strategies to reach students who struggle with math and literacy. Learning in and through the arts is active and engages students in school, a key factor for student success. Arts-infused learning reaches children through all learning modalities—auditory, kinesthetic, tactile and visual.

**Performance-based assessments offer a more realistic and valuable picture of student achievement.**

The current model for identifying educational success labels schools, teachers and students as successful or failing based on one end-of-year assessment. Performance-based assessments offer a more realistic and ongoing picture of student strengths and weaknesses. The performance-based assessments used in Arts Impact, which offer clear learning goals and evaluation criteria, help teachers engage students in their own progress. This approach builds student confidence through daily successes and points out what they need to work on to achieve greater success. Teachers receive immediate feedback on the success or failure of individual students and the class as a whole, providing direction on how to adjust instruction appropriately. It is an approach that, if used more frequently and broadly across the curriculum, creates a portfolio of student learning demonstrating the day-to-day ability of students to meet state standards.

**Arts-infused instruction offers students access to learning modalities that can open doors to understanding.**

With purposeful arts-infused instruction, students find new ways to understand and demonstrate arts, math and literacy concepts. The conceptual intersections of dance, theater and visual arts with other subjects:

- Give students more opportunities to show their knowledge
- Provide new ways to communicate ideas
- Apply learning in multiple contexts
- Help students think critically
- Engage students in collaboration
- Nurture creativity

**A quality professional development program can make all the difference.**

A professional development program offering sufficient and intense training over a several year period can build the arts knowledge and teaching confidence required for effective arts-infused education. Long-term training and classroom support can change the way teachers teach across all disciplines—potentially for the rest of their careers. Quality leadership training of principals can set in motion changes that lead to a school’s embrace and sustained implementation of arts-infused education.

> “Several kids said they did not want to go home. One girl (pretty difficult) said that it was the best art she ever made, other children were complimenting each other on their work...‘that is so beautiful’...etc.”

—Arts Impact Mentor describing an Arts Impact lesson for which she was present
PSESD and ArtsEd Washington are actively working to bring Arts Impact and PAL to schools outside of the Puget Sound area—in combination and as independent programs. Both organizations are working on replication models, and ArtsEd Washington is working to expand PAL via a partnership with the Association of Washington School Principals and a collaborative pre-service model with the Arts Education Partnership’s Higher Education Working Group.

Roosevelt Elementary School in Bellingham, in partnership with Allied Arts of Whatcom County, replicated Arts Impact with the greatest degree of fidelity. The school was also enrolled in the ArtsEd Washington PAL program. This—and a variety of factors such as strong program administration, a supportive principal and faculty, experienced teaching artists and an active arts community—contributed to its success.

Best Practices for Arts Impact Replication
Arts Impact is an intensive, long-term model that requires local staff and resources for successful implementation and sustainability. Although every community replicating Arts Impact will vary in its cultural, financial and educational resources, certain factors can make the effort more successful. These include having:

- A strong program administrator with significant arts education background and experience
- A fully engaged and supportive principal and faculty
- Whole-school participation
- Highly experienced teaching artists
- Support for the program at the district level
- The PAL program implemented in tandem
- Multiple funding sources
- A healthy arts and cultural community

Please contact us to learn how you can bring the inspiration of arts-infused learning into your school!

“I can honestly say this was the most detailed piece of writing I have gotten from these students all year! In fact, it is the most writing they have produced all year!”

—3rd grade teacher at Birney Elementary, Tacoma School District remarking about writing samples of her largely English Language Learner class after participating in arts-infused lessons
Contact us to learn how you can bring the inspiration of arts-infused learning into your school:

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