Arts Impact, an arts-infused professional learning program of Puget Sound Educational Service District, has demonstrated many times that arts integration is an effective strategy for increasing success for struggling students. It has also demonstrated that after completing the two-year Arts Impact program, general classroom teachers improve overall practice and gain the confidence and competence to independently continue arts-infused teaching. Arts Impact has replicated these outcomes in six U.S. Department of Education Arts in Education grant projects. So why aren’t school districts lining up to provide arts-infused professional learning for their teachers?

There are several challenges. It is costly to provide the in-depth training, one-on-one mentoring support, ongoing instructional support, and quality art supplies that are hallmarks of effective programs like Arts Impact. In the face of mandates to raise student achievement on high stakes tests in math, reading, and science, districts feel the arts are peripheral and therefore time and resources for the arts are not prioritized. It takes courageous leaders to implement and support the change necessary for arts-infusion to become part of the core teaching strategies within a school.

The Arts Impact Dissemination and Expansion (AIDE) project set out to: develop arts-infused curriculum resources; evaluate less expensive models of training; and identify conditions and systems that support successful implementation and sustainability of innovative evidence-based practices, like Arts Impact, in a variety of settings. AIDE asked how can the arts improve teacher efficacy and student achievement in and through the arts, and how can those gains be scaled up across both large urban districts and smaller rural and small town schools.
For the first time, Arts Impact analyzed performance-based assessments to

determine if the opportunity gap persisted when students were able to learn and
demonstrate their learning in math and reading through an artistic product—a work

of art, short choreographed dances, or theater tableau—alongside traditional

mathematic and literacy ways of responding.

The data revealed that when disaggregated by race, student performance-based

assessment outcomes in arts-infused lessons showed that the opportunity gap

between children of color and their white counterparts essentially evaporated.

There was no difference between assessment scores for students of color and

white students. The achievement gap was closed. Outcomes for those same

students on the Measurement of Student Progress, Washington’s high stakes

state test, in reading and math showed that while the opportunity gap was still

evident, it narrowed in all but one case.

This finding is significant and clearly indicates that students need a variety of ways

to engage with core content and demonstrate what they know and can do. AIDE

proves, consistent with other research on competency-based assessment, that a

more balanced approach to assessment is needed to provide a true measure of

student achievement.
In an effort to more efficiently and economically scale up arts-integration as a district-wide teaching and learning strategy for improving student success in under-performing schools, Arts Impact adapted its successful arts-infused professional learning program to create a teacher leader model. This model trains a core group of teachers within a school who then share their learning across the building.

Outcomes indicated that in order for teachers to develop the confidence and competence to be leaders of change in their buildings, they need more than two years of direct support. Previous Arts Impact research clearly shows that teachers acquire the confidence and competence to infuse the arts in their own classrooms, but additional time is needed to develop the skills to coach fellow teachers in arts-infusion.

In a parallel project to AIDE, also in Seattle Public Schools, the teacher leader model was successful. However, it took hundreds of hours over the course of six years working closely with Arts Impact Artist Mentors for teachers to become effective teacher leaders. It should be noted that part of the six years was devoted to developing building specific adaptations so in reality an effective teacher leader model may take less than six years, but definitely more than two. Once teachers have gained the initial skills and knowledge to integrate the arts, they need additional time to develop coaching skills and systemic supports within their schools.

DEVELOPING TEACHER LEADERS TAKES TIME
The AIDE project affirmed what Arts Impact and other research organizations have proven about the critical importance of principal buy-in and commitment for an arts integration program to be sustained after training is complete. Initially, principals in the AIDE schools were all supportive of the project. However, over the course of the project, all three of the AIDE schools changed principals. In two schools, the new principals did not embrace the idea of arts-integration, virtually stopping implementation of the project. In the third school, the new principal did support arts-integration. At this school, the first principal had also put structures in place that supported ongoing implementation by teachers after the change in leadership. This reinforces the need to improve efforts around the development of systems to support arts-infusion simultaneously with training.
AIDE is a partnership of Puget Sound Educational Service District’s Arts Impact program, Seattle Public Schools, four regional cultural organizations: Pacific Northwest Ballet, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle Children’s Theatre, and University of Washington World Series of Dance, as well as NorthEast Washington ESD 101, and four Eastern Washington cultural organizations: Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, Jundt Museum of Arts, Gonzaga University, and Whitworth University.

AIDE studied the impact of the arts-infused professional learning program, Arts Impact, on teacher effectiveness and the impact of arts-infused teaching and learning on student achievement in urban and rural settings, as well as students from traditionally under performing demographic groups. The project also investigated the activities, systems, and conditions necessary to successfully replicate the Arts Impact model with fidelity outside of a major metropolitan region.

The project used a quasi-experimental design that compared seven treatment and seven control schools on several different measures (see page 9). Six Seattle Public Schools elementary schools and eight Eastern Washington elementary schools were randomly assigned to either a control or treatment group. The average free and reduced lunch rate for Seattle schools was 70%, and for schools in Eastern Washington, it was 54%.
1. Build capacity and systematically increase arts education across Washington State by expanding and replicating the innovative Arts Impact model in other regions of Washington state

2. Strengthen K-5 standards-based arts education

3. Improve student academic performance in the arts, math, and reading, including the achievement of rural students and those in groups traditionally identified as low performing

4. Develop and disseminate grant products and results: Key Professional Development Features for Arts Integration, K-5 arts-infused curriculum in reading and math, Readiness to Benefit Assessment Tool, Key Features Assessment Tool, and training videos

The program provided 104 hours of direct professional learning over the course of two years. Training Year 1 covered the Arts Impact-developed sequential, K-5 Arts and Reading Infused curriculum, revised and updated to align with Common Core State Standards for the AIDE project. Training Year 2 covered the sequential K-5 Arts and Math Infused curriculum developed specifically to CCSS Standards for the AIDE project.
2010-11
Planning year - This year consisted of curriculum development and revision, refining the implementation and evaluation plans, hiring new teaching artists for the Eastern Washington replication site, and collecting baseline data from treatment and control group teachers and students.

2011-12
Year 1 - Treatment group teachers in Seattle completed 52 hours of Arts Impact professional learning focused on the Arts and Reading Infused curriculum. That same year, Eastern Washington Artist Mentors and project administrators completed over 100 hours of training on the Arts Impact model.

2012-13
Year 2 - Treatment group teachers in Seattle completed an additional 52 hours of training focused on the Arts and Math Infused curriculum for a total of 104 hours of arts-infused professional learning.

2013-14
Sustaining year - Eastern Washington implemented the Arts and Reading Infused curriculum for 24 treatment group teachers. The final year, 2012-13, the project followed treatment and control groups in Seattle to determine sustainability of the professional development and implementation of a teacher leader model. The Eastern Washington portion of the project was discontinued 2013-14 in due to lack of sufficient supplementary funding during the economic downturn.
EVALUATION PLAN AND TIMELINE

Treatment and control groups were evaluated using the following instruments:
- STAR Protocol – a classroom observation tool. (Baseline, Training Year 1, Training Year 2, Sustaining Year)
- Measure of Student Progress – Washington’s standardized test in math and reading. (Training Year 1, Training Year 2, Sustaining Year)
- District Student Math Assessments. (Training Year 1, Training Year 2)
- Student Arts Knowledge Test. (Training Year 1, Training Year 2, Sustaining Year)

Treatment group teacher data was also gathered using the following measures and tools:
- Autonomy Rubric for Teachers (ART) – an analytic four-point rubric to measure growth of teacher autonomy to teach and assess the arts. (Training Year 1, Training Year 2, Sustaining Year)
- Performance based assessments to measure teacher learning of arts concepts taught in the lessons. (Training Year 1, Training Year 2)
- Teacher interviews. (Sustaining Year)
- Teacher journals. (Training Year 1, Training Year 2, Sustaining Year)
- Professional Learning Communities. (Training Year 1, Training Year 2, Sustaining Year)

Treatment group students were also evaluated using the following measures and tools:
- Performance based assessments embedded in the AIDE curriculum. (Training Year 1, Training Year 2)
As mentioned above, results on the AIDE performance-based assessments (PBAs) showed no differences in achievement between students of color and white students in the treatment schools. This corroborates Arts Impact’s premise that performance-based measures of student learning reveal that students of all ethnicities achieve at a high rate through arts-infused instruction and when learning is measured using alternatives to paper/pencil recall tests covering an entire year of content. Overall student outcomes for PBA’s across all sites were quite high with students meeting criteria between 80% and 100% on most lessons. A lesson with students meeting less than 80% of criteria is unusual in Arts Impact indicating that when students are given the opportunity to show their understanding of concepts in and through the arts, more students are successful.

Qualitative teacher feedback consistently shows that when students are able to demonstrate what they know and can do through an artistic expression—an artwork, a piece of choreography, or a dramatic scene—teachers discover abilities and capabilities in students that traditionally perform poorly, strengths that would not have otherwise been revealed. Success in demonstrating concepts such as a balanced equation, story structure, or congruent shapes through artistic pathways has provided many students the confidence they need to continue to succeed.

The AIDE findings are even more significant when they are placed alongside the recent National Endowment for the Arts report on four studies that showed low-income students do better academically and attend college at higher rates if they are intensely involved in the arts (2014) as well as James Catterall’s study Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Arts (2009) that found low-income and ELL students do better in arts-rich vs. arts-poor schools. The AIDE PBA data suggests yet another benefit of the arts for at risk students. Learning in and through the arts provides students alternative ways to express their knowledge. It is widely accepted and researched that children do not all learn in the same ways. Conversely, it stands to reason that students also express their knowledge and understanding in different ways. However, current policy relies solely on one type of demonstration of knowledge to hold school districts, schools, and teachers accountable for student achievement.
Outcomes on measures of teacher growth in confidence and competence to infuse the arts were quite positive, showing that at a minimum 80% of teachers scored a 3 or 4 – the two highest ratings – on the Autonomy Rubric for Teachers by the end of two years of Arts Impact training. In addition, ratings from the STAR™ Protocol, a classroom observation tool that identifies the presence of Powerful Teaching and Learning©, showed treatment classrooms outperformed the control by 20 points. These results are consistent with outcomes obtained by Arts Impact over 16 years of implementing and evaluating its professional learning model.

These outcomes indicate that teachers were capable of effectively using arts-infused teaching and learning strategies in the context of their own classrooms. However, implementing in the classroom and leading change across an entire school are two different skills. The teacher leader model is a new adaptation of Arts Impact to try to more efficiently and economically scale up arts integration across a school district by training teacher leader cohorts in several buildings simultaneously. Arts Impact piloted the teacher leader model in two previous PDAE grants in four SPS elementary schools over six years. What was discovered was that the additional time in training and collaboration with Arts Impact Artist Mentors received by the teacher leaders in the PDAE projects is necessary for successful implementation of the teacher leader model.

Other factors that impacted the success of the model were: principal leadership and support, teacher mobility rates within a building, compensation for additional responsibilities, developing whole school buy-in, and use of building resources. What we have learned is that what was intended to be a cost-saving measure might actually cost as much or more due to the additional time necessary to develop teacher leaders. However, in the PDAE schools, arts-integration has been quite successful and has become an integral part of the school culture and approach to student success. The teacher leader model as a way to scale up arts-integration is very promising but needs further development and research.
The AIDE project was implemented with fidelity and student, teacher, and classroom outcomes were very positive, especially during the two years of direct professional learning—Training Years 1 and 2. However, in the Sustaining Year, when teachers were asked to teach the AIDE curriculum on their own, collect student PBAs, share learning across their buildings, and report on frequency of arts-infused teaching in the classroom, implementation fell off dramatically in two of the three schools.

All three schools experienced a principal change during the Sustaining Year and one school experienced considerable attrition of project teachers—from six to two—because of teacher mobility and retirement. Interviews revealed that lack of principal support during the Sustaining Year was the biggest reason teachers did not continue teaching the Arts Impact AIDE curriculum and continue to work with building colleagues to share arts-infused teaching strategies. Time for including arts-infusion was also listed as a big factor for not teaching AIDE, but teachers also indicated that had principals been supportive of them, they would have made the time.

In the school where implementation continued in the Sustaining Year, principal leadership of the outgoing principal was extremely strong. The principal of this school was committed to arts-infusion as a way to support student success. She was active in a principal leadership group that worked with ArtsEd Washington on developing integrated arts training for principals and advising on the SPS district wide arts plan Creative Advantage. This school also organized family and community activities around the arts that included an Arts Walk and Dine Out, and a student Arts Sleepover, structures that built building and family buy-in.
AIDE investigated the systems and conditions necessary to replicate the Arts Impact model in different geographic areas and settings from the large urban area of Seattle. It partnered with NorthEast Washington Educational Service District (NEWESD) and Eastern Washington regional cultural and educational institutions to train local Artist Mentors and administrators to implement Arts Impact in remote rural and small town schools and districts. AIDE was very successful in training the new Arts Impact Artist Mentors and administrators and implemented a full year of Arts Impact professional learning in four schools. Teacher, principal, and district buy-in of the Eastern Washington cohort was very high, and teacher and student outcomes were consistent with the positive outcomes experienced in the Seattle schools. However, the second year of training for Eastern Washington had to be suspended due to lack of sufficient funding during the economic downturn.

Examination of the various factors that contributed to both successes and challenges of replicating AIDE in Eastern Washington led to investigation of indicators of readiness to benefit and implement evidence-based programs such as Arts Impact. The National Implementation Research Network developed the Hexagon Tool, a framework to analyze six broad factors to consider when doing early stage exploration of evidence-based practices. The six factors included in the Hexagon Tool are: Need in agency, community, state; Fit with current initiatives; Resources and Supports; Evidence; Readiness for Replication; and Capacity to Implement. A retrospective analysis of project implementation readiness for NEWESD to implement using the Hexagon Tool revealed high ratings in the areas of Need, Fit, Readiness for Replication, and Evidence, a medium rating in the area of Capacity to Implement, and a low rating was noted in the area of Resources and Supports. The tool is designed to reveal strengths and weaknesses so that a decision to implement or not to implement is made knowing where the gaps are and what needs to be done to strengthen areas of weakness.
RECOMMENDATIONS

BALANCED APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT

- Provide students opportunities to demonstrate learning in and through the arts to narrow the opportunity gap and reveal hidden student capabilities.
- Use classroom based performance assessment data formatively to inform and differentiate instruction.
- Use performance based assessments along with other types of assessment to get a true measure of overall student achievement.

CONTINUE TO INVESTIGATE EFFECTIVE TEACHER LEADER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING MODELS FOR ARTS-INFUSED TEACHING

- Provide a minimum of three years of direct support from Artist Mentors that includes the basic two-year Arts Impact professional learning model with at least one additional year (30-40 hours) to develop coaching and mentoring skills.
- Consider strategies for developing early buy-in from entire school faculty around arts-infused teaching before selecting the teacher leader team.
- Include development of a school arts team and school arts plan as part of the training model to establish systems that will sustain through teacher and principal changes.
- Include training on implementation of effective learning communities.
- Provide compensation and/or career ladder opportunities for teacher leaders.
- Develop capacity for district-level teacher leaders to support classroom teachers in arts-infusion.
- Develop strategies to increase principal support and leadership of arts-infused instruction.
- Emphasize importance of building systemic support systems within buildings and district central offices to mitigate principal and teacher mobility.
NOW THAT I KNOW ABOUT CONTRAST, I KNOW WHAT’S IMPORTANT IN BOOKS AND PICTURES.

Hajira, 4th grade student, Madrona K-8
Contact us to learn how you can bring the arts to your school:

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