



EVALUATION REPORT

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YEAR 3 EVALUATION REPORT

DUANE B. BAKER, Ed.D.
STACY M. MEHLBERG, MA- ATR



Duane Baker is the founder and president of Baker Evaluation, Research, and Consulting, Inc. (*The BERC Group*). Dr. Baker has a broad spectrum of public school educational and program experience, including serving as a high school classroom teacher, high school assistant principal, middle school principal, executive director for curriculum and instruction, and assistant superintendent. In addition, he has served as an adjunct instructor in the School of Education at Seattle Pacific University since 1996, where his emphasis has been Educational Measurement and Evaluation and Classroom Assessment.

Dr. Baker also serves as the Director of Research for the Washington School Research Center at Seattle Pacific University. He also serves as an evaluator for several organizations including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Washington Education Foundation, Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and others.

Members of *The BERC Group* have K–20, experiences as teachers, counselors, psychologists, building administrators, district administrators, and college professors. The team is currently working on research and evaluation projects at the national, state, regional, district, school, classroom, and student levels in over 1000 schools in Washington State and nationally.



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Executive Summary

The Creative Advantage is a city-wide initiative to establish equitable access to arts education for all students in Seattle Public Schools. It is made possible through a public-private partnership with Seattle Public Schools, the City of Seattle Office of Arts and Culture, the Seattle Foundation, and community arts organizations.

This evaluation focused on three main components of the Creative Advantage for 2015-16 school year: regional and school arts planning, the impact of the Creative Advantage on student learning, and practice of 21st Century skills and professional development for SPS teachers and teaching artists. A key component of The Creative Advantage was the creation of regional arts plans for each of the district's nine¹ learning pathways. The Central Arts Pathway (CAP) was chosen to pilot the process, which began in the spring of 2013. In 2014-15, the South-Southwest Arts Pathway (SSWAP) entered its regional planning phase, and program leaders introduced the Southeast Arts Pathway (SEAP) as the next region to begin Regional planning in 2016-2017. The remaining pathways will begin planning on a staggered basis between 2017 and 2020 (ARTS and SPS, 2013).

During this third year of implementation, The Creative Advantage report focused on three research questions for this evaluation report:

- Question 1: To what extent does student participation in the arts change over time?
- Question 2: To what extent does the use of 21st Century Skills instruction change over time?
- Question 3: What are the emerging promising practices?

The Creative Advantage also continued to advocate for the arts as a critical component of basic education for all students in Seattle.

As part of the evaluation process, researchers conducted classroom observations at all pathway schools, to explore the impact of The Creative Advantage on 21st Century learning, instructional practice, and student engagement. These school visits, in addition to interviews with program leaders and school stakeholders, revealed a wide range of procedures, practices, and levels of engagement present during the 2015-2016 school year. One arts team leader shared, "This year we are going deeper and wider. It's not about a particular unit, lesson plan, or class, but about creating a school atmosphere...we are trying to create an entire school where every kid feels comfortable and challenged". Another noted, "The big theme for us has been equity, and equal access to arts. We are a very diverse population, but we are segregated. We want to learn how to use the arts as a way of desegregating."

There were several promising practices uncovered during this evaluation process, including:

- Clear evidence of 21st Century Skills in 42% of the CAP classrooms they visited in 2016, compared to 34% in 2015, and 23% in 2014. There was also evidence of an increase in student perseverance, culturally responsive teaching, and critical thinking.

¹ By 2020 the District will include 12 pathways.



- As a result of The Creative Advantage Pathways and SPS increased investments in the arts, over 5000 students are receiving music instruction from a certificated music teacher. There is qualitative and quantitative evidence of increased awareness and presence of arts in school buildings.
- Evidence of robust relationships with many of the community arts partners on the approved roster. Within the CAP, all 13 pathway schools used at least a portion of their funds towards partnerships.
- A city and district wide investment in professional development focused on the arts. One program leader explained, “We have opportunities for teachers across the district. Many program stakeholders communicated that partnerships formed as a result of The Creative Advantage helped their school, “to access the cultural connection for our students, make school more meaningful and interesting- giving them opportunities to express their individual likes and interests.”

Overall, The Creative Advantage continues to be distinguished by three emerging promising practices: increasing relationships with community arts partners throughout the city, strong support for school level planning and vision building, and a fundamental belief in equity for all students throughout the city of Seattle. The collaboration between the district, the city, and the community arts partners allows all of the stakeholders to organize their efforts around arts learning. Program leaders continue to provide support for the initiative, and are planning to increase the reach of The Creative Advantage into a new pathway in 2016-17.

Recommendations for future planning and implementation of The Creative Advantage include continuing to provide opportunities for focused professional development around 21st century learning and culturally responsive instruction, developing opportunities to include student voice in The Creative Advantage processes, and increasing opportunities for teacher collaboration and communication about The Creative Advantage, within schools, communities, and across the City of Seattle.

Creative Advantage Evaluation

YEAR 3 REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Creative Advantage is a city-wide initiative to establish equitable access to arts education for all students in Seattle Public Schools. The Creative Advantage is made possible through a public-private partnership with Seattle Public Schools, the City of Seattle Office of Arts and Culture, the Seattle Foundation, and community arts organizations. In 2011, a planning grant from the Wallace Foundation enabled the partnership to conduct a needs assessment around the state of arts education in Seattle Public Schools. This needs assessment found inconsistent access to arts education, especially for students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, students eligible for the transitional bilingual program, and students identifying as Black, Hispanic, or American Indian/Alaska Native. Vast discrepancies emerged in program offerings based on school resources.

To address these concerns, the Seattle K-12 Arts Plan was created, and aims to provide equitable arts access throughout the district. The plan lays out specific benchmarks for the number of hours or credits each grade band of students will receive in certificated arts instruction. The goal is to ensure that every student at every elementary, middle, and high school is getting consistent, high-quality instruction in the arts. For example, the goal at the elementary level is for students to receive 60 minutes of music and visual art instruction each week. The plan also emphasizes the importance of 21st Century Skills that are developed through the arts, including creative and critical thinking, collaboration, communication, perseverance, and growth mindset. As the comprehensive plan states, “SPS needs to be preparing its students to graduate with the skills needed to thrive in Seattle’s strong creative economy as well as the many innovation driven companies of the region, such as Boeing, Microsoft, and Amazon.com (pg. 16).” Finally, the plan focuses on creating access to school-community arts partnerships that increase student engagement and broaden their experiences in the arts. For a more thorough history and background on The Creative Advantage please refer to the Year 1 and Year 2 Evaluation reports, located on The Creative Advantage website (www.creativeadvantageseattle.org).

The Creative Advantage approach includes investing in increased arts access in the schools, engaging in regional and school arts planning with k-12 pathways, building community arts partnerships, providing comprehensive professional development, and conducting rigorous evaluation of the program to address emerging promising practices and continual improvement. Five goals were established as the focus of The Creative Advantage:

- High quality arts instruction that teaches sequential arts skills and techniques, develops students’ 21st century skills, and is culturally responsive.
- Instruction from certified arts teachers.
- Integrated arts instruction.
- Arts partnerships with community-based organizations and teaching artists.
- Opportunities to connect arts to careers in high school.



Implementation

A key component of The Creative Advantage is the creation of regional arts plans for each of the district's nine learning pathways. The Central Arts Pathway was chosen to pilot the process, which began in the spring of 2013. In 2014-15, the South-Southwest Arts Pathway entered its regional planning phase, and program leaders introduced the Southeast Pathway as the next region to begin planning in 2016-2017. The remaining six pathways will begin planning on a staggered basis between 2017 and 2020 (ARTS and SPS, 2013).

Following each regional planning year, school level planning begins. Each elementary, middle, and high school within the pathway assembles an arts team, including administrators, teachers, community partners and parents. This team works with a Creative Advantage Arts Leadership Coach to develop their school's 3-year arts vision, and an implementation action plan for the following year. Stakeholders at the school level continued to speak positively about the facilitated planning meetings. Teachers and administrators also spoke with excitement about their vision moving forward. The South-Southwest Arts Pathway schools created their plans in spring of 2016, and the Southeast Pathway will begin their facilitated regional planning meetings in 2017.

In addition to the arts pathways and regional and school level planning, another essential component of The Creative Advantage was the creation of a Community Arts Partner roster. The individual teaching artists and organizations, listed on The Creative Advantage website, provide valuable arts learning opportunities for students throughout the city. Examples of organizational partners include the EMP museum, The Seattle Arts Museum (SAM), the Jack Strong Cultural Center, and the Seattle Children's Theater. The complete roster, containing over 70 partners throughout the city, can be searched by discipline or preferred grade level. Pathway schools are provided a budget of \$7500 during their first two years of implementation, with the intention of using these funds to hire arts partners that best fit their unique school and community needs. Art teams at each school are tasked with developing partnerships and selecting the most appropriate way to spend their funds in alignment with their arts plans.

The purpose of this report is to outline and communicate the current status of The Creative Advantage, and to present evaluation findings for The Creative Advantage in the Central Arts Pathway (CAP) in Year 3, and the South-Southwest Arts Pathway (SSWAP) in Year 1 (Table 1). Additionally, the report will highlight programmatic successes, emerging promising practices, barriers to implementation, and contextual factors influencing the current and future arts pathways.

Table 1.
Pathway Plans

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Central Arts Pathway	<i>Year 1</i> <i>Regional Planning</i>	<i>Year 2</i> <i>SP</i>	<i>Year 3</i> <i>SI</i>	<i>Year 4</i> <i>SSP</i>			
South Southwest Arts Pathway		<i>Year 1</i> <i>Regional Planning</i>	<i>Year 2</i> <i>SP</i>	<i>Year 3</i> <i>SI</i>	<i>Year 4</i> <i>SSP</i>		
Southeast Arts Pathway				<i>Regional Planning</i>	<i>Year 2</i> <i>SP</i>	<i>Year 3</i> <i>SI</i>	<i>Year 4</i> <i>SSP</i>

Year 1 Regional Planning
Year 2 School Planning (SP)
Year 3 School Implementation (SI)
Year 4 School Sustainability Planning (SSP)

THE CREATIVE ADVANTAGE YEAR 3

Evaluators identified several key findings during this third year of The Creative Advantage. These included a continued focus on communicating the goals of The creative Advantage, a focus on arts partnerships and professional development, systemic shifts resulting from participation and involvement with The Creative Advantage, and continued advocacy for equitable arts education as a part of basic education.

Continued Focus

In May 2016, evaluators met with The Creative Advantage program leaders, including the Seattle Public Schools Visual & Performing Arts Manager, Seattle Public Schools Creative Advantage Project Manager, and Seattle Office of Arts & Culture Arts Education Manager, to discuss the current programmatic components and changes within The Creative Advantage. One program leader began by sharing, “Not everybody understands the title of The Creative Advantage. It is not an arts grant... It is an investment that SPS and City of Seattle are making in their schools and in their region.” This comment began an engaging discussion around the current intentions and practices driving The Creative Advantage during its third year. Program leaders remain focused on the original evaluation questions, specifically looking at equity for all students concerning access to the arts, including increased instructional minutes, increased partnerships with community arts organizations, and increased exposure to the arts throughout entire communities. Program leaders are comprehensive in their desire to see the arts as a critical component of basic education for all students in Seattle.



During a December interview on the Seattle Channel (www.seattlechannel.org), one program leader shared, “We want monumental change... Even this is not enough, but it is a start.” The interview focused on the unique aspects of The Creative Advantage, including the city-school district partnership funding structure, as well as the commitment of SPS to prioritize the arts for all students throughout the district. Additionally, the interview addressed issues of sustainability for such a comprehensive, large scale initiative. Three key terms; comprehensive, sequential, and predictable, guide much of the work of The Creative Advantage, with a goal of providing students, families, and the community with opportunities to integrate the arts in meaningful ways, at all schools across the district. The hope is that families can feel confident knowing that their child will receive the same high quality, comprehensive education regardless of the neighborhood in which they live. The Creative Advantage is working toward meeting this goal through access to the arts. The 30-minute Seattle Channel interview is just one of the many ways program leaders are prioritizing communication about the initiative to the community.

Communication about The Creative Advantage

Throughout the 2015-2016 school year, program leaders distributed monthly electronic arts pathway newsletters to arts team leaders at all pathway schools, and The Office of Arts & Culture distributed monthly e-news letters to arts partners, and others interested in arts education. Additionally, all community and school stakeholders have access to these materials through a link on The Creative Advantage website. Newsletters included details about upcoming trainings and professional development opportunities, school level celebrations and successes, and administrative information. As an example, in the Inaugural SSWAP newsletter, program leaders acknowledged the success of the January 14th launch of the Creative Advantage SSW School Arts Teams. The newsletter also outlined the main objectives of the Creative Advantage, and provided specific details for beginning school wide planning in the SSW Arts Pathway. Specifically, monthly newsletters articulated a clear purpose, direction, and talking points for The Creative Advantage, including:

- **The arts influence student academic outcomes**
Students who participate in the arts do better academically, are more engaged in learning, are less likely to drop out of school and go on to college, and as adults are more likely to exhibit pro-social behavior when compared to peers who haven't had arts education
- **We want young people to have the tools to express themselves and their ideas.**
Creative outlets are essential to share their viewpoints with the world. This is especially important for students of color, who may not have other safe outlets.
- **It's an equity issue: A basic education inclusive of the arts is mandatory in Washington State, but many schools are not able to provide the necessary class time**
While there are award-winning programs in some schools, many students do not have consistent access to the arts as they move through their school careers.

A follow up newsletter for the SSWAP provided more specific information to guide school arts teams on beginning the work with their arts partnerships. The June SSWAP newsletter also offered talking points to help communicate The Creative Advantage to new school communities. Some of

these strategies included using a full staff meeting to begin the conversation, offering an initial art experience to the entire staff with opportunities for reflection, introducing the arts team members and giving them the opportunity to share the work they will be doing, and reinforcing the idea of school-wide collaboration.

Additionally, monthly newsletters for the Central Arts Pathway addressed continuing programmatic issues, including professional development opportunities, community arts events, and celebrations from schools throughout the city. The April 2016 CAP newsletter outlined the funding available for the upcoming school year, year 3 (\$2500 per school from the Office of Arts & Culture), and provided a clear explanation of how schools can acquire additional funds from The Creative Advantage by finding their own income sources to match available funds.

The Creative Advantage and City of Seattle also published a Research Brochure and Progress Report to communicate the purpose, focus, and program components to community members and stakeholder groups. Information in the brochure included a description of what The Creative Advantage is, why The Creative Advantage is necessary, and how and where to learn more. The Creative Advantage Progress report provided a clear, comprehensive summary of the work so far, with quantitative and qualitative data to support and strengthen the discussion.

While these communication efforts have been comprehensive and accessible, it remains unclear how often stakeholders are accessing the on-line communication tools. Program leaders continue to explore additional methods of communicating The Creative Advantage to increase its reach throughout the community.

Professional Development Opportunities

Within The Creative Advantage there is a city and district wide investment in professional development. One program leader explained, “We have opportunities for teachers across the district. Professional development includes our partnership with the Seattle Art Museum, who leads an annual learning series in the spring, and the annual Creative Advantage institute each August. The institute is open and available to everybody.” Professional development is also offered to teachers on topics such as integrating dance into physical education, media-arts integration, and theatre integration.

SPS also has a close partnership with Arts Corps. This partnership is investing in developing arts assessments that teach and assess arts and 21st Century skills. The goal is to train all 190 teachers in the Visual and Performing Arts Program in the 21st Century Arts Common Assessments for a full launch during the 2016-17 school year. As a result of the assessment system, a new research question has emerged, “How can we look closely at The Creative Advantage Pathways to see if instruction changes as a result of 21st century skills.” Consistently, each Creative Advantage newsletter includes a list of upcoming professional development opportunities throughout the year and information is shared to all visual and performing arts teachers in the district through email and Schoology, the district learning management system.



Systemic Shifts

The Creative Advantage continued to promote shifts in thinking about the arts throughout the city. The hope is that The Creative Advantage has the potential to be a far-reaching and expansive influence throughout the public-school system, as well as within the diverse communities that make up the city of Seattle. In support of this perspective, some of the system-wide investments that were implemented in connection with The Creative Advantage included the planning for media arts skills center programs, the media arts and technology professional development series, and the 21st Century Arts Common Assessment.

Additionally, the Seattle Public Schools Visual & Performing Arts Manager noted the district's commitment to preserving FTE for the arts. She shared, "SPS has different strategies to do this. One is to make a commitment to hiring and retaining high quality, certificated arts teachers for all schools in the district. The other is to use district budgeting guidelines to ensure that, at the elementary level for Preparation-Conference-Planning (PCP) courses, schools meet Basic Education requirements in the arts by staffing music and visual arts teachers before staffing other content areas." Additionally, she noted,

The hope is that, with systemic support, the district reaches our staffing goals. The intention is to create an arts rich culture at every school. That is what will be sustainable beyond FTE. If we change the cultures in the schools, then maybe we will be able to sustain those economic downturns... We talk a lot about rigorous planning for the Seattle K-12 Arts Plan. It is about authentically making meaning, being intentional, and going back to the vision and shifting the culture of schools to be embracing of arts education."

Arts Advocacy and Support

The Creative Advantage advocates for arts education, and for the students of SPS: "The environment has shifted. What is the state of things and how are we moving this work forward is a constant question? We are pushed to find different avenues of moving forward as the context changes." Program leaders, district and school level stakeholders, and community arts partners participated in professional development, the creation of informational media, and support of arts teams and administrators across the arts pathways. One arts team leader noted, "Lara, Gail, and Audrey are receptive to feedback, and are dynamic about how to move forward. It is inspiring." Another shared, "The leadership at Creative Advantage is very supportive, and made it clear to me that anything I need or have questions about, they are available. They believe in what they are doing, and I have felt very supported because of that."

EVALUATION DESIGN

Methodology

This evaluation utilized a multiple measures, mixed methodology approach. The collection of both quantitative and qualitative data adds scope and breadth to the study, in addition to providing the ability to triangulate findings (Creswell, 1994). Descriptions of the evaluation questions and data sources are provided below.

Evaluation Questions

This year, program leaders identified specific evaluation questions driven by the current status of the arts plan. This report highlights data collected to respond to three research questions:

- Question 1: To what extent does student participation in the arts change over time?
- Question 2: To what extent does the use of 21st Century Skills instruction change over time?
- Question 3: What are the emerging promising practices?

Participants

Program leaders identified the Central District – Washington Middle School Service Area as the pilot area for The Creative Advantage initiative. Table 1 includes the 13 schools in the Central District, identified as the Central Arts Pathway, that began the plan in the 2013-14 school year. Table 2 includes the ten schools in the South-Southwest Arts Pathway, which began school level planning in 2015-16.

Table 2.
Central Arts Pathway Schools

School Level	School
Elementary Schools	Bailey Gatzert Elementary School
	Leschi Elementary School
	Lowell Elementary School
	John Muir Elementary School
	Thurgood Marshall Elementary School
	McGilvra Elementary School
	Montlake Elementary School
Stevens Elementary School	
K – 8 School	Madrona K – 8 School
Middle School	Washington Middle School
High Schools	Garfield High School
	Nova High School
	Seattle World School (a 6-12 school for students who are new to the United States and need extra English Language Learning supports)



Table 3.
South-Southwest Pathway Schools

School Level	School
Elementary Schools	Arbor Heights Elementary
	Concord International Elementary
	Highland Park Elementary
	K-5 STEM at Boren (option)
	Roxhill Elementary
	Sanislo Elementary
Middle School	West Seattle Elementary
	Denny International Middle School
High Schools	Chief Seattle International High School
	Interagency Southwest at Youngstown
	Cultural Arts Center

Data Sources

Focus Groups, Surveys and Interviews

Evaluators completed site visits to the Central Arts Pathway and South Southwest Pathway schools to conduct focus groups and interviews with arts team teachers and administrators during the spring of 2016. The use of structured focus group/interview protocols provided a qualitative perspective to allow the evaluators to tell the story of The Creative Advantage as it evolves and adapts to meet the needs of the diverse SPS communities. Additionally, a focus group was conducted in the spring of the 2015-2016 academic year with key program leaders, and a survey was administered to art partners participating in The Creative Advantage.

STAR Classroom Observations[®]

In addition to focus groups and interviews during site visitations, evaluators conducted observations in classrooms throughout the pathway schools. The STAR Classroom Observation Protocol^{®2} is designed as a research instrument to measure the degree to which Powerful Teaching & Learning[™] (cognitive, research-based instruction) is present during any given period of observation in a classroom. Through 12 Indicators, the STAR Protocol[®] efficiently assesses student learning in the areas of *Skills, Thinking, Application, and Relationships*. In addition, we modified the existing protocol to include 21st Century Skills: *Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, and Persistence*. Finally, we also aggregated four indicators on the protocol to develop a *Culturally Responsive Component*.

² Researchers completed a validation study on the STAR Protocol in 2010. Report findings established content, concurrent, and construct validity. Good inter-rater reliability was also found using the Kappa reliability coefficient (.90) in addition to internal consistency (.92) using Cronbach's Alpha for the Indicators taken together. Furthermore, the STAR Protocol's single construct, Powerful Teaching and Learning[™] (PTL), was found to show a positive contribution to student achievement beyond the effects of low income. Most notably, a unique contribution was found for PTL in predicting math achievement. About 7% of the variance in math achievement was explained by PTL (Baker, Gratama, Petersen, & Thompson, 2010).

Student Data

The BERG Group worked with SPS to obtain and analyze student level data, including achievement results, course taking patterns, absences, and disciplinary events. This information is updated annually to provide a longitudinal perspective on the initiative.

Document Collection and Analysis

Evaluators collected and analyzed various documents related to the initiative, including the Seattle K-12 Arts Plan, previous research reports, survey data, and The Creative Advantage and partner websites.

Evaluation Findings

Contextual Factors

Interviews and focus groups with school stakeholders and program leaders revealed positive and negative contextual factors impacting the overall implementation of The Creative Advantage, at the District and school levels. These included hiring certified teachers in the arts for all of the pathway schools, creating master schedules with space to accommodate an increase in arts minutes, and shifting teacher and administrator perspectives about the arts as core content. Additionally, communication about program goals and activities continued to be a contextual factor in Year Three. One administrator asked, “How do we make an arts initiative a priority, in a community where there are multiple voices fighting for value- some schools have several competing initiatives, using time and energy from already tapped teachers?” These factors will be explored throughout this evaluation report.

Evidence of Planning and Implementation

Program Level Planning and Implementation.

Supported Arts Team Coordinator

In 2014-2015, Stakeholders at all levels, from teachers to administrators to community arts partners, suggested that each school establish a “point person” to coordinate implementation activities. Furthermore, several community arts partners identified a school representative as the support structure that would be most beneficial to their partnership with CAP schools. They believed this point person would facilitate clear communication and collaboration between schools and community arts partners. For the 2015-2016 school year, a stipend position was created to support CAP arts teams. Comments from teachers during spring focus groups did not clearly reflect an understanding of this change, however. Expressing a repeated theme, one participant noted, “One of the biggest barriers to implementing the initiative is the amount of time required of teachers to do the planning with the community partners without additional compensation.” Although program leaders did include information about this additional funding in the June 2015 CAP newsletter, it did not appear to have been accessed by many school level stakeholders.



Focused Professional Development

The Creative Advantage partners with Seattle Art Museum to provide professional development to classroom teachers, arts specialists, and community arts partners. During the 2015-2016 school year these opportunities included: The Creative Advantage annual daylong Summer Institute, and a five-session Professional Learning Series between January and May. The Media Arts and Technology Professional Learning Series specifically targeted secondary teachers and specialists, making connections between arts and careers for students. This grant funded opportunity was co-designed and implemented by staff, Career Tech Education instructors and industry professionals. Tables 4 and 5 provide a sample of offerings from The Media Arts and Technology Professional Development Series, and The Professional Learning Series.

Table 4.

Examples from Media Arts and Technology Professional Development Series

2016 Media Arts for Every Classroom Workshop				
Workshop Title	Date	Enrollment	Overall Rating*	Sample Comments
Storytelling Through Video	1/30	20	Innovative	Hands-on, creative and active learning was valuable
Graphic Design	2/27	18	Innovative/ Proficient	Wish I had developed deeper knowledge in one program; I wish I had a paper copy of directions; Hands on learning great
Podcasting	3/26	33	Innovative	Most valuable learning was the hands-on learning and practice.
Showcase	4/30	32	Innovative	Thank you, as usual, a terrific learning environment

*Overall rating determined by combining responses and calculating the average overall for each workshop.

Table 5.
Workshop Offerings from the CA Arts Partner Summer Institute

The Creative Advantage 2016 Professional Learning Series			
Workshop Title	Date	Enrollment	Sample Comments
Social Practice in Arts Education	2/20	27	It [The workshop] is perhaps some of the best I have had because I had to look at self. Powerful stuff.
Strategies for Youth Voice	2/27	32	*
Trauma Informed Practice	3/26	24	The workshop was well facilitated and there was a high level of engagement.
Social and Emotional Learning	4/30	16	I love how it delved into thinking about the student as well as taking care of the teacher.

Participant feedback was collected at the end of each professional development session. Overall, teachers and arts partners responded positively to the trainings, rating³ most as innovative (4), or proficient (3). Many teachers shared that the use of hands-on learning, collaboration, and creativity made the courses useful when considering their own instructional practice. When asked about the most valuable learning, several teachers shared, “hands-on-collaboration,” “time to practice and ask questions,” and “time for collaboration.”

Central Arts Pathway Year Three Implementation

The Creative Advantage Experience

Focus groups and interviews throughout the CAP revealed a wide range of procedures, practices, and levels of investment during the 2015-2016 school year. One arts team leader shared, “This year we are going deeper and wider. It’s not about a particular unit, lesson plan, or class, but about creating a school atmosphere... we are trying to create an entire school where every kid feels comfortable and challenged”. Another noted, “The big theme for us has been equity, and equal access to arts. We are a very diverse population, but we are segregated. We want to learn how to use the arts as a way of desegregating.”

³ Rated on a 4-point scale, with 4=innovative, 3=proficient, 2=basic, 1=unsatisfactory



Understanding of The Creative Advantage

Overall, CAP arts teams and administrators seemed clear on the goals and intentions of The Creative Advantage, and referenced the arts plans they had created as their framework for decision making. One shared, “Making the vision statement was a really useful tool.” Additional comments regarding the goals of The Creative Advantage included,

“It has given us more access to more processes. We are rethinking how to take what we know and use it with different mediums...how to use the creative process and modalities, and how they link to your own personal narrative.”

“The Creative Advantage helps the whole community to get excited about what they are learning, see how it connects to their creative process, and how they can apply their learning in new ways...see integration of process and creative inquiry.”

“For kids who are really interested in art, we want them to know that it’s possible to pursue the arts.”

“As an art teacher, I really like to see all teachers do art with their classes. When kids come to art with me, they realize it is not just something done in a specific time and place, but can be done anywhere with anyone. That it does not require super special, expensive things makes it more accessible.”

When asked about school level decision-making during the spring 2016 focus group, program leaders were clear in their intentions: “We want to empower the schools to do things in a way they think are powerful but also move our vision along.”

Arts Teams

Several administrators within the CAP expressed confidence in their arts teams and leaders, and shared that they were comfortable giving team leaders the autonomy to choose how to use the provided funds. Other administrators seemed more reluctant to empower the team leaders to make fiscal decisions. This became evident during focus groups at schools identifying as having less autonomy. These arts team leaders were less likely to have an understanding of the funds provided, and often expressed confusion about the scope of The Creative Advantage. Examples of this uncertainty included whether staff positions were purchased with the Creative Advantage money or PTSA money, if arts partners were Creative Advantage approved and funded, and if there was money spent at all during the year. Some teachers expressed feeling like the scope of information was overwhelming, while others added, “Our art teacher is integral in our relationships and understanding”, suggesting that a point person was an essential aspect of process.

Despite some confusion about the technical components of The Creative Advantage initiative, focus group participants from several CAP schools shared evidence of increased awareness of the arts in their school buildings. Many talked about the new bulletin boards created to display student artwork, and others shared successes from cultural nights and art walks introduced into their buildings. One school arts team shared that they incorporate information and updates about The

Creative Advantage in their weekly newsletters, and another assigned a PTSA liaison to help communicate the initiative.

Arts Partnerships

In addition to an increased awareness and presence of arts in school buildings, data collected by program leaders suggests robust relationships with many of the arts partners on the approved roster. Within the CAP, all 13 pathway schools used at least a portion of their funds towards partnerships. Jack Straw Cultural Center, Experience Music Project, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Arts Core, and Arts Impact were a few of the most frequently engaged partners. Individual teaching artists and smaller arts organizations were also actively engaged in the process this year. Additionally, four of the twelve schools observed used all of their available funds for the year, while the remaining schools carried a balance forward into the 2016-2107 school year. Many program stakeholders communicated that partnerships formed as a result of The Creative Advantage helped their school,

to access the cultural connection for our students, make school more meaningful and interesting- giving them opportunities to express their individual likes and interests.

Others also spoke to the ability of these partnerships to help students make meaningful cultural connections, and access strengths and skills they did not know existed. This is one of the goals of The Creative Advantage; to build culturally responsive classrooms with instruction aligned to meet the diverse needs of students. These relationships, between arts partners and classroom teachers, provide opportunities to accomplish this.

Schools in the CAP used the partnerships in a variety of ways. A few schools reported dividing the money equally between grade levels, while others chose to target specific grades, or alternate between funding years.

Challenges

There continued to be some challenges regarding the process of choosing, and building relationships with partnerships, with one team leader mentioning, “The process has felt a little overwhelming at times; the roster is very valuable, but it is immense.” Overall, however, focus group participants seemed pleased with the diversity of the partnership list, and felt that communication had improved since the first year of implementation.

Creative Advantage program leaders suggested, “(the) process is really about getting schools to be *thoughtful* about partnerships. As an example, a lot of the partners on the roster provide field trips; we have been able to say, ‘field trips are not something we would directly fund, but if connected to a learning experience in a culminating project we can’.” In the September 2015 newsletter, program leaders reminded CAP schools about how to access the partnership list, and introduced the twenty new partnerships added to the list for the 2015-2016 school year.



South-Southwest Arts Pathway (SSWAP) School Level Planning Year

During the 2015-2016 academic year, schools in the SSWAP participated in school-level planning to develop a three-year vision and a year one action plan with measurable goals for the upcoming year. Schools were provided a mentor principal called an Arts Leadership Coach to facilitate these meetings, and formed an arts team composed of school administrators, staff, parents, community partners, and sometimes students to lead their school's effort regarding The Creative Advantage. During the spring 2016 focus group, program leaders shared perceptions on the school level planning process, noting that, "School level plans have not been focused on FTE [certificated staff]. Instead, they have had more focus on professional development, and community development. They really are embracing it, and are focused on building community around the arts." Creative Advantage program leaders also spoke to the process of identifying the needs of SSWAP schools, and creating a plan to best support those needs. During regional planning the principals of the 10 schools came to a consensus to focus arts staffing funds on elementary music instruction. As a result of not receiving full funding from SPS for this pathway, however, additional funding for the middle and high schools was not fully available.

Understanding of The Creative Advantage

During focus groups at SSWAP schools in spring 2016, researchers asked art teams and administrators about their understanding of The Creative Advantage, the planning processes and communications so far, and their hopes and concerns as they prepared for their first implementation year in 2016-2017. School level stakeholders in the SSWAP seemed to have a clear understanding of The Creative Advantage's overarching message. Comments included:

"To bring more equitable access to the arts for all students in SPS."

"Creative Advantage is trying to provide the resources to decrease the opportunity gap."

"My understanding is that the grant is to try and make sure all of the students funneling into the middle schools have the same amount of music experience"

"We need experts in the arts. An art teacher knows techniques and can teach skills. What I can do in the classroom is adequate, but does not lay a foundation for future exposure."

There appeared to be less understanding of the structural components of The Creative Advantage, however, with several participants somewhat unclear of the expectations for partnerships, the acceptable uses for the money provided, and the length and scope of the initiative outside of the money. Most schools discussed the plan to hire a music teacher, although many knew of the challenges to accomplish this task across the district. Additionally, a few schools appeared unclear about the differences between this initiative and Arts Impact⁴ grants they had been, or were currently participating in. At the high school level frustrations about the shift in processes was

⁴ Arts Impact received a 3-year Federal research grant to explore integrating arts, STEM and project-based learning. They wanted to implement this in the next Creative Advantage pathway because it provides the chance to leverage building up of the arts in a region through the CA. They selected West Seattle Elem. And Concord International Elem.

communicated, with school level stakeholders feeling that they had lost money they were originally offered. One administrator acknowledged understanding the reasons, but still feeling disappointed in the change.

Analysis of the SSW

Planning

The majority of teachers and administrators spoke very highly of the facilitated planning meetings held in the spring. Comments included, “We had two planning meetings this year, and a coach to come talk with us. It was good information because it helped us to focus,” and “(our) first meeting we originally thought it would be a boring 3-hour meeting, but at the end we thought wow! Did we just do that. We started grouping words, and created a vision that we can continue to work on. Second meeting at the end of May; that meeting went fast too! But we developed a solid plan.” Another teacher shared, “In February, we had our first creative advantage meeting. It was wonderful to hear from other schools, and have experiential learning... We had a facilitator from another pathway as our coach, who met with us for about three hours to develop our vision. We did a SMART⁵ goal process to help us conceptualize what we want things to look like, and then came up with three measurable goals.” Several schools commented that they would have appreciated even more time with their principal mentor, although most acknowledged the time provided was well spent.

Support at the school level was also discussed during focus groups and interviews. A few arts team members expressed some concern about the prioritization of the initiative at the administrative level. One teacher commented, “Our administration does support us, but we are in a school with low test scores, so they say they are committing to the arts, and they might really want to, but we are wondering how they are going to fit everything in. The staff is afraid, too. They feel overwhelmed, and they are worried about test scores...” Another shared that, “Prioritizing which initiatives are a focus...is really the discussion piece.” Additionally, one teacher openly stated, “Our principal is not on board...it is a struggle. I feel like this is probably not uncommon, but it would be great to be able to deputize other people to take the lead.”

Communication

Despite the clear, informative SSWAP newsletters published in January and April 2016, only two focus group participants from the total represented at all SSWAP schools referenced this as a resource for communicating the initiative. Yet, school level stakeholders consistently shared that the path of communication could be more clear, and could include resources for spreading understanding of The Creative Advantage initiative to families and community in addition to school faculty. One school arts team spoke to the timeline of communications, suggesting, “the timeline has not been great for us...it would have been helpful to have someone support us in how to work with the parents, and to help us set up some partnerships. We feel like we lost the first year.”

When asked about hopes for, or benefits of, participating in The Creative Advantage, participants in the SSWAP were eager to share their thoughts. Quotes from focus group discussions included:

⁵ SMART goals are defined as Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely.



“I am excited to see partnerships happening.”

“Just having the money set aside so I don’t to beg for it. I can use it to bring in artists, musicians, etc...”

“I do think that the arts activate a part of the brain that brings about creativity and problem solving, which our kids need exposure to.”

“I really do want to emphasize that the arts are important to infuse in the schools, and the money that comes from Creative Advantage will go a long way to helping us achieve that.”

Evidence of Impact

To what extent does student participation in the arts change over time?

Table 6 provides a list of the total number of students receiving music instruction with a certificated music teacher with funds provided by the Creative Advantage. As of December 2016, over 5000 students are receiving music with teachers funded by CA.

Table 6.
Total number of students receiving music instruction by a certificated arts teacher funded by The Creative Advantage.

School	Number of Students
Central Arts Pathway (CAP)	
Bailey-Gatzert Elementary School	346
Leschi Elementary School	404
Lowell Elementary School	330
McGilvra Elementary School	283
Montlake Elementary School	390
John Muir Elementary School	425
Stevens Elementary School	300
Thurgood Marshall Elementary School	544
Total CAP	3022
South-Southwest Arts Pathway (SSWAP)*	
Arbor Heights Elementary School	344
Concord International	321
Highland Park Elementary School*	377
Roxhill Elementary School	307
Sanislo Elementary School	171
STEM K-8	470
West Seattle Elementary School	236
Total SSWAP	2226
Total Students	5248

* The SSWAP numbers are not for 2015-16. They are for 2016-17. Only STEM k-8 had music in 2015-16.

In addition to number of students served, researchers are currently gathering data to accurately report the number of arts minutes students in The Creative Advantage Pathway schools are currently receiving. These minutes will reflect a scaled score of weekly minutes with a certificated arts teacher. Once a baseline is established, researchers will create a longitudinal database to represent change in arts minutes over time.

Skills instruction change over time? (Students and Teachers)

The 21st Century Skills, as defined by SPS, are skills and learning dispositions critical to success in school, career, and life. These include *Creative Thinking*, *Critical Thinking*, *Communication Skills*, *Collaboration Skills*, and *Perseverance Skills*. An additional 21st Century Skill used by SPS, *Growth Mindset*, is not included in the Protocol due to the difficulty inherent in measuring it through classroom observations, instead of surveys or other means. *Creative Thinking* is manifested as the teacher providing students an opportunity to generate and develop novel ideas and solutions, and to make their own choices about how to approach learning tasks, instead of using scripted lessons and assignments. *Critical Thinking* is manifested as the teacher providing opportunities for students to elaborate, refine, analyze, and/or evaluate ideas, instead of just recalling information. *Communication Skills* are manifested as teachers providing students the opportunity to articulate their thoughts and emotions effectively using oral, written, and nonverbal skills, instead of just stating correct or incorrect answers. *Collaboration Skills* are manifested when teachers provide students with opportunities to work effectively and respectfully in diverse teams, instead of simply completing assignments individually. *Perseverance Skills* are manifested when teachers support students to persist in completing tasks and goals in the face of obstacles, instead of allowing them to give up.

How are the 21st Century Skills measured?

The 21st Century Skills section of the Protocol includes relevant strategies from the STAR Protocol as well as additional strategies developed through research into 21st Century Skills. One half of the Indicators (n=5) are designed to measure the extent to which the teacher initiates effective opportunities for students to demonstrate the 21st Century Skills. The other half of the Indicators (n=5) are designed to measure the extent to which students are effectively engaged in using these skills. The 21st Century Skills section of the Protocol is scored on all 10 Indicators, all five 21st Century Skills Components, and Overall. The scores from the original STAR Protocol are not included in scoring; however, because several observables exist in both the STAR Protocol and the 21st Century Skills section, there is often some overlap. The 4-point scoring scale represents the extent to which 21st Century Skills are evident during an observation period. The Indicator and Component scales range from 1-Not Observable to 4-Clearly Observable. The Overall score represents the extent to which the overall teaching and learning practices observed were aligned with Powerful Teaching and Learning. The 4-point scale ranges from 1-Not at All, 2-Very Little, 3-Somewhat, and 4-Very.



Evidence of Instructional Change

Central Arts Pathway:

Year 2

During focus groups and interviews, CAP arts teams and administrators shared their perspectives on the impact of The Creative Advantage initiative with their students. One teacher commented,

I've always been apprehensive to teach arts...as a young teacher, I always thought of art integration as more work, or something I would have to do on my own time. Creative Advantage has made me realize there is a little extra thought to adding art into learning, instead of a huge endeavor. It makes learning and teaching more fun. It expresses my identity as an educator, and I can transfer it to the kids, and help them to make it their own learning. In the long run, not as much more work, and makes it engaging for me too.

Others spoke of the continued benefits to students that have traditionally had less access to the arts, or students that may not have found their voice in other subject area, but are emerging from their shells as a result of these opportunities provided. One school arts team shared, **“The potential is huge for our school. Arts are something the students are invested in, and the community has advocated for. Creative Advantage has helped to negotiate, and act as a leverage point.** Another school administrator noted, “(It is) great for our kids to be exposed to the arts. There is lots of research on brain development, and the arts give kids something else they can be good at. They are an outlet for ideas and creativity...kids are definitely more engaged in projects, and are very proud of their artwork.”

Overall, researchers found clear evidence of 21st Century Skills in 42% of the CAP classrooms they visited in 2016, compared to 34% in 2015, and 23% in 2014 (Figure 7). This demonstrates consistent growth over time since baseline data collection. All of the skills scored in the moderate range, and most have improved, with only communication remaining consistent from the 2015 data collection. In 2016, **Creative thinking was the highest-scoring skill**, with 46% of classrooms scoring a 3 or 4, representing an increase of 9 percentage points from 2015 (Figure 8). Scores of 3 and 4 for Perseverance demonstrated the strongest growth (Figure 12), increasing 15 percentage points from 2015, and 26 points since the 2014 baseline data collection. Scores in Critical Thinking also showed noticeable growth, demonstrating a 14% increase in scores of 3 and 4 since 2015 (Figure 9). Scores for Collaboration and Communication remained fairly consistent during spring 2016 observations, and represent areas of focus for the upcoming school year (See Figures 10 and 11).

An analysis of individual indicators (Table 7) revealed that researchers observed 46% of teachers providing students an opportunity to generate and develop novel ideas/solutions and make their own choices about how to approach learning tasks, up from 37% during 2015. Similarly, 48% of teachers provided opportunities for students to engage in meaningful dialogue, assignments, and tasks. Additionally, Critical Thinking indicators 15 and 16 increased over 10 percentage points each during the 2016 observations, demonstrating an increase in opportunities for students to engage in skills in multiple ways, and refine and analyze their own ideas.

South-Southwest Arts Pathway

Year One

For the SSWAP, researchers found evidence of 21st Century Skills in 40% of classrooms during baseline data collection (Figure 7). Evidence of Creative Thinking was observed in 50% of classrooms scoring a 3 or 4, representing the highest scoring indicator for the SSWAP.

Perseverance scored the lowest during baseline data collection, with 31% of classrooms scoring a 3 or 4. It should be noted that while baseline scores for the SSWAP are consistently higher than 2014 baseline scores for the CAP, there are concurrent arts initiatives that may be influencing these data points. Four of the SSWAP schools are also involved with an Arts Impact grant focused on STEM and Arts-Infused Learning in a whole school model. Two of these schools, West Seattle elementary and Concord Elementary, receive professional development, including a dedicated artist mentor and collaboratively developed lesson plans, throughout each year of the Arts Impact grant. The two remaining schools, Highland Park Elementary and Sanislo Elementary, act as control schools, participating in the evaluation for comparison purposes, but receiving no interventions. This additional exposure, training, and support may be an influence on the baseline scores from these classrooms, accounting for differences between the pathways.

An analysis of individual indicators (Table 8) revealed that researchers observed 51% of teachers providing students an opportunity to generate and develop novel ideas/solutions and make their own choices about how to approach learning tasks. This was the highest scoring indicator during baseline observations. The lowest scoring indicator, at 23%, was students reflecting on growth, connecting learning tasks to long-term goals, and/or practicing strategies for taking responsibility and dealing with challenges.

Overall

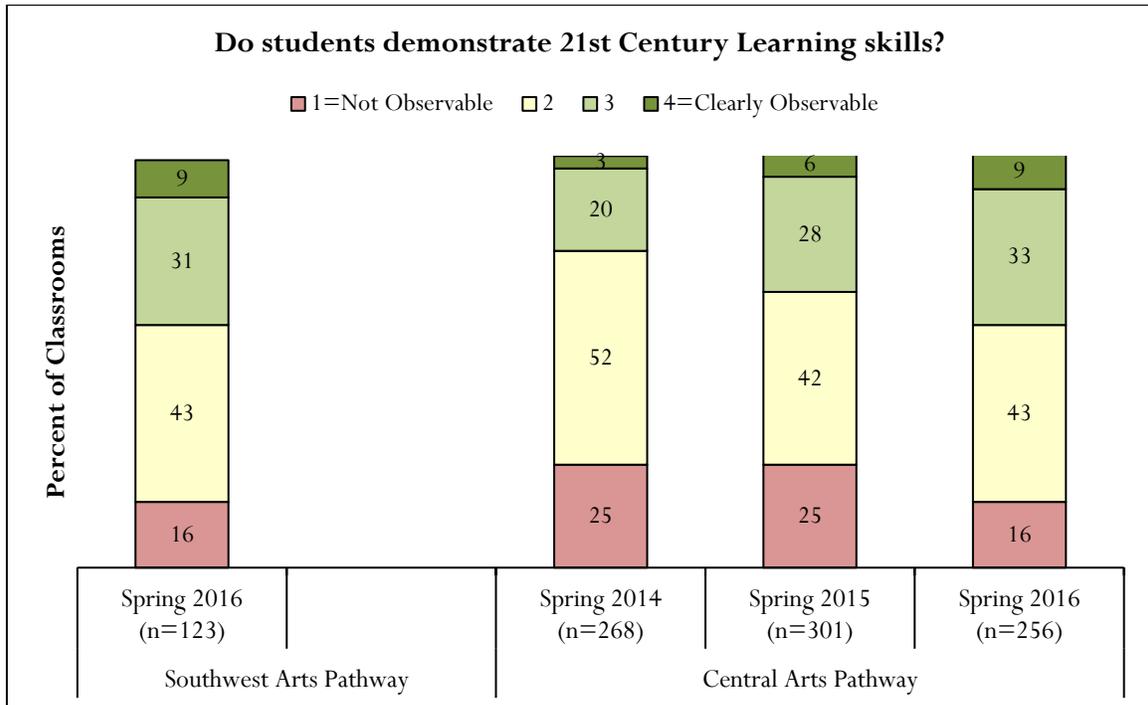


Figure 7



Creative Thinking

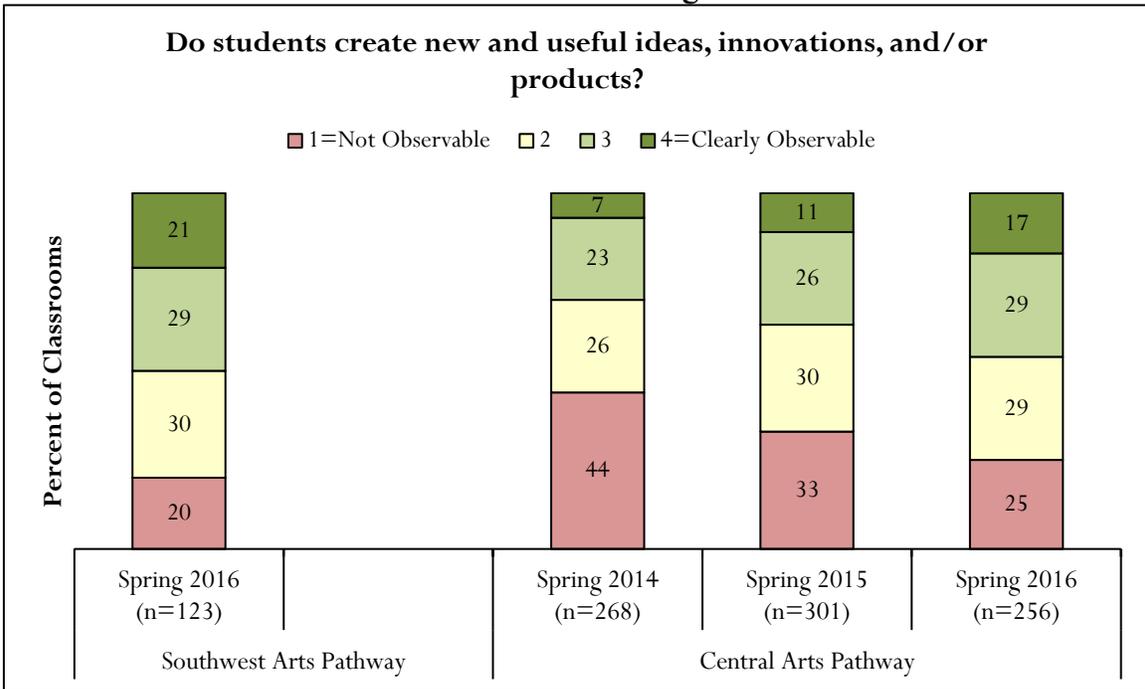


Figure 8

Critical Thinking

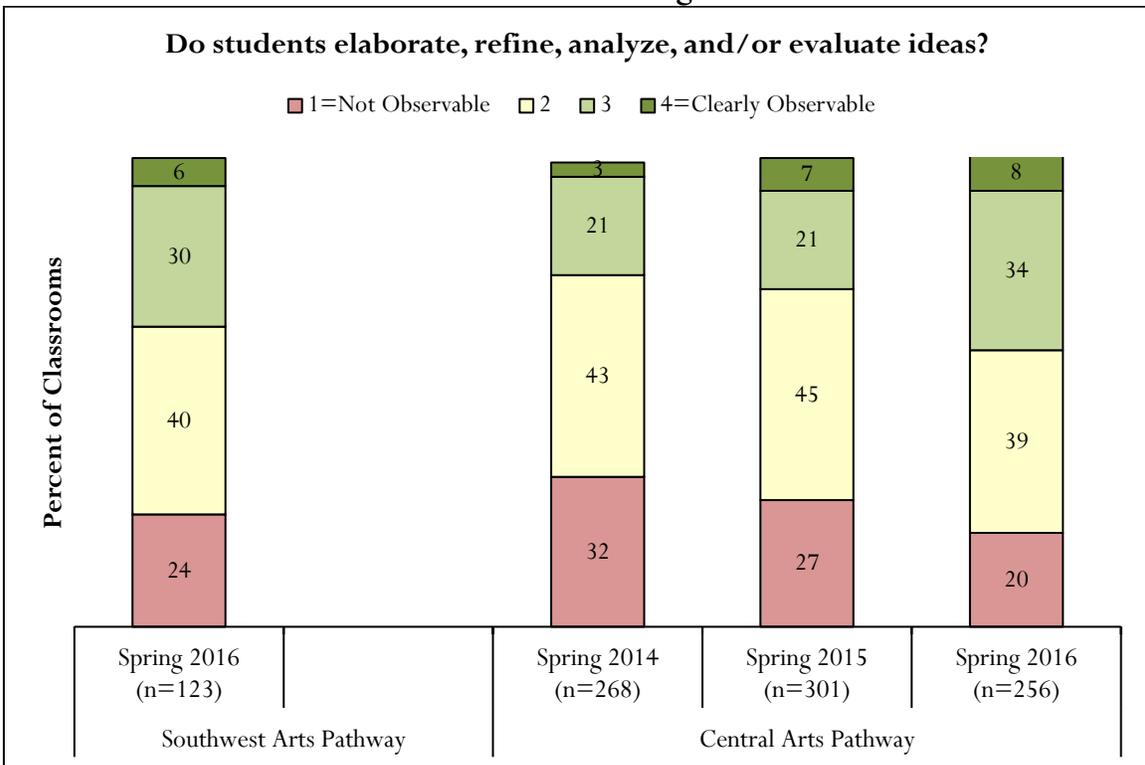


Figure 9

Communication

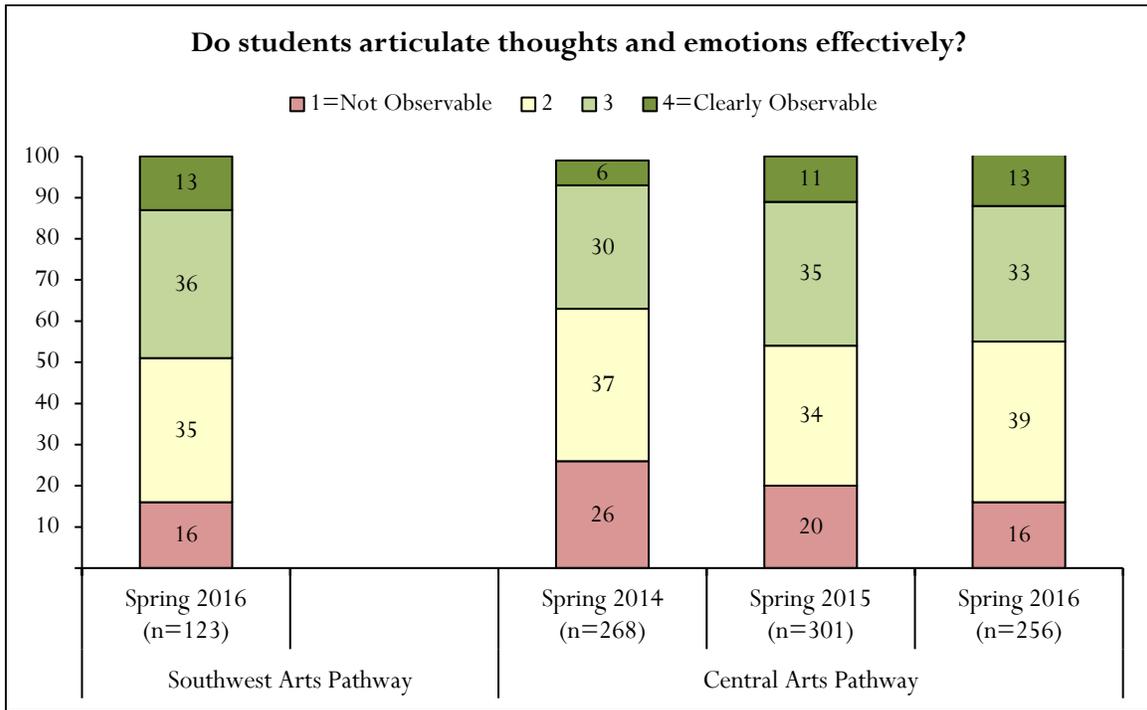


Figure 10

Collaboration

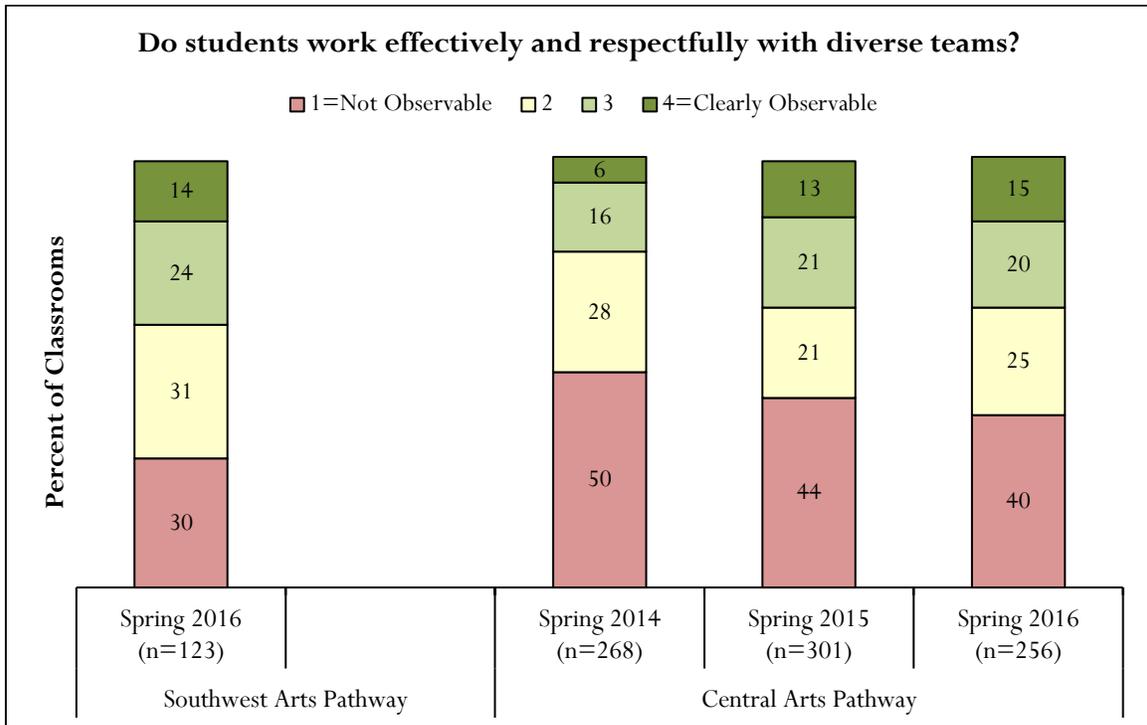


Figure 11



Perseverance

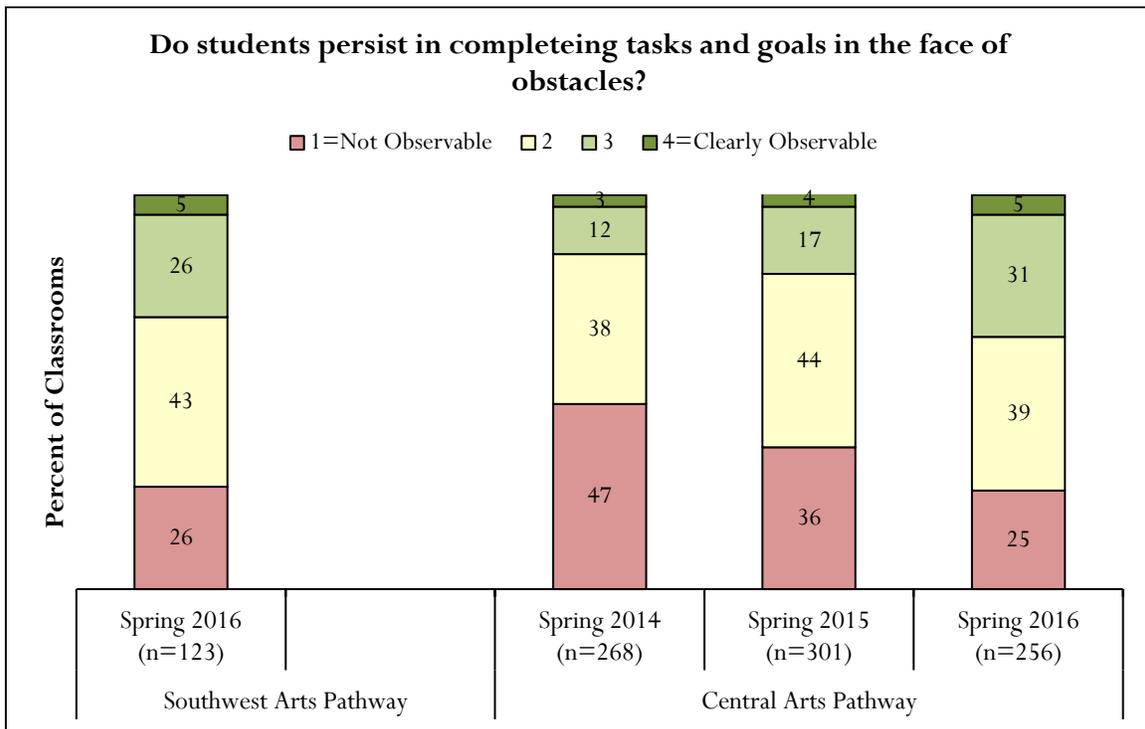


Figure 12

Table 7.

21st Century Skills Indicators, Central Arts Pathway

<i>Creative Thinking</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
13. Teacher provides students an opportunity to generate and develop novel ideas/solutions and make their own choices about how to approach learning tasks.	26%	28%	24%	22%
			46%	
14. Students create new and useful ideas, innovations, and/or products.	29%	29%	23%	18%
			42%	
<i>Critical Thinking</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
15. Teacher provides opportunities for students to engage with skills/concepts in multiple ways.	21%	42%	27%	10%
			37%	
16. Students elaborate, refine, analyze, and/or evaluate ideas.	18%	42%	30%	10%
			40%	
<i>Communication</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
17. Teacher provides students an opportunity to engage in dialogue, debate, and written/oral assignments.	13%	38%	34%	15%
			48%	
18. Students articulate thoughts and emotions.	16%	40%	29%	15%
			44%	
<i>Collaboration</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
19. Teacher provides opportunities for student collaboration.	39%	24%	20%	17%
			37%	
20. Students work effectively and respectfully in teams.	43%	24%	19%	13%
			32%	
<i>Perseverance</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
21. Teacher provides encouragement and problem-solving strategies.	21%	38%	31%	9%
			41%	
22. Students reflect on growth, connect learning tasks to long-term goals, and/or practice strategies for taking responsibility and dealing with challenges.	38%	34%	24%	4%
			28%	



Table 8.
21st Century Skills Indicators, South-Southwest Arts Pathway

<i>Creative Thinking</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
13. Teacher provides students an opportunity to generate and develop novel ideas/solutions and make their own choices about how to approach learning tasks.	20%	30%	27%	23%
			51%	
14. Students create new and useful ideas, innovations, and/or products.	30%	22%	28%	20%
			48%	
<i>Critical Thinking</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
15. Teacher provides opportunities for students to engage with skills/concepts in multiple ways.	29%	33%	31%	7%
			38%	
16. Students elaborate, refine, analyze, and/or evaluate ideas.	23%	41%	29%	7%
			36%	
<i>Communication</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
17. Teacher provides students an opportunity to engage in dialogue, debate, and written/oral assignments.	13%	38%	34%	16%
			49%	
18. Students articulate thoughts and emotions.	20%	34%	31%	14%
			45%	
<i>Collaboration</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
19. Teacher provides opportunities for student collaboration.	34%	27%	23%	16%
			40%	
20. Students work effectively and respectfully in teams.	38%	27%	20%	15%
			35%	
<i>Perseverance</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
21. Teacher provides encouragement and problem-solving strategies.	23%	37%	30%	10%
			41%	
22. Students reflect on growth, connect learning tasks to long-term goals, and/or practice strategies for taking responsibility and dealing with challenges.	36%	41%	20%	4%
			23%	

Additionally, researchers disaggregated the results from STAR data collections to look specifically at Arts classrooms. Within the CAP, results of observations conducted in the Arts classrooms show evidence of 21st Century Skills at comparable rates to the total classroom scores, except for creative thinking, which scored eleven percentage points higher. In 2016, 21st Century Skills were seen in 40% of Arts Classrooms compared to 42% of all other classrooms (Figure 13). Both of these scores were slightly higher than during 2015 observations. Creative Thinking was evident in Arts classrooms at a moderate range, with 57% scoring a 3 or 4 in 2016 compared to 46% of total classrooms during the same year (Figure 14). Arts classroom scores for creative thinking, while still the highest scoring Skills, were slightly lower than during the previous data collection. For the SSWAP baseline data collection, disaggregated scores for Arts classrooms were again consistent with total classroom scores. It should be noted that the sample size for SSWAP teachers was small (N=7), making it difficult to analyze the results. Additional charts including both the CAP and

SSWAP data can be found in the Appendix, with results charted for all 21st Century skills longitudinally.

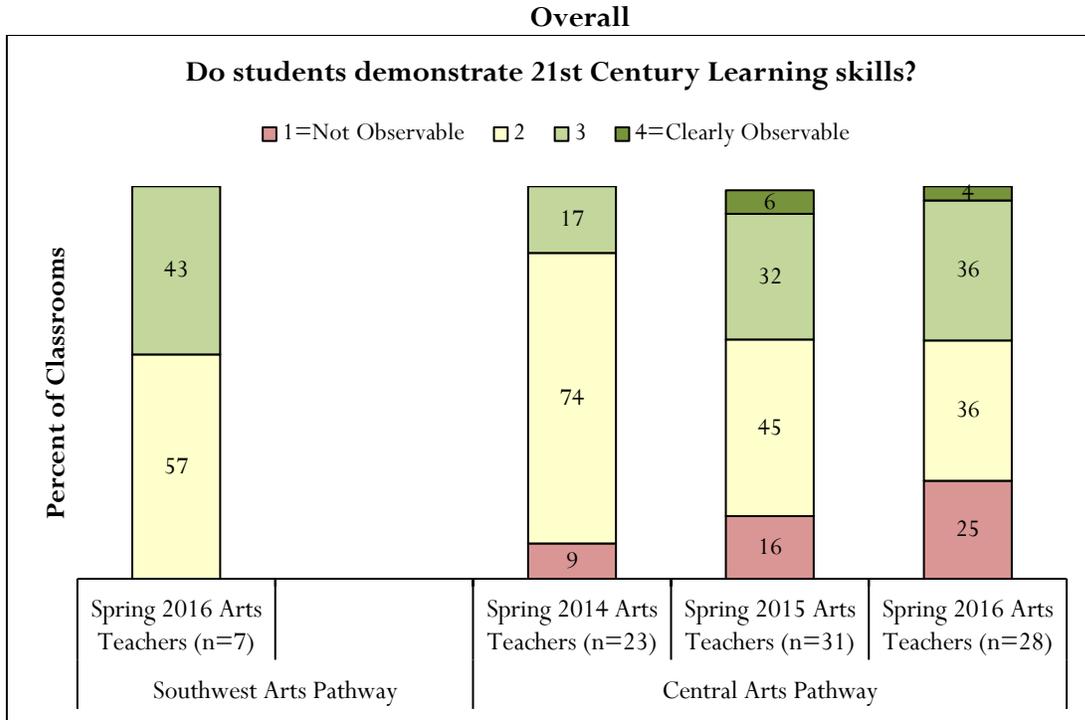


Figure 13. Disaggregated results from Arts Classrooms

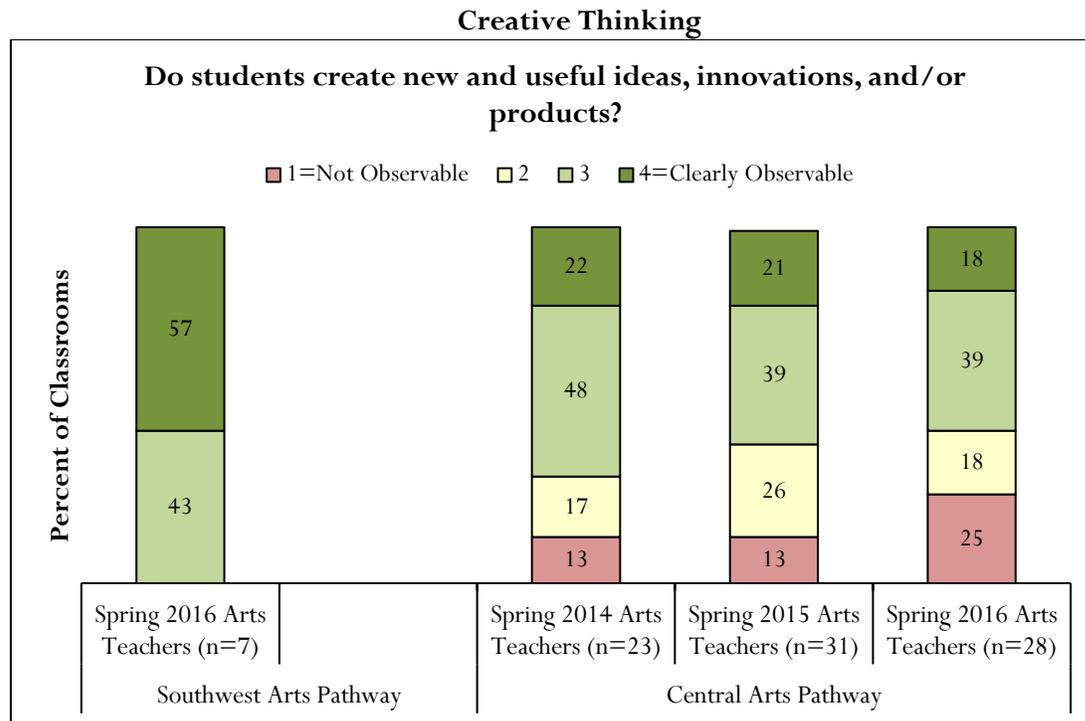


Figure 14. Disaggregated results from arts classrooms



Cultural Responsiveness. In conjunction with personnel from SPS, researchers at The BERC Group identified four Indicators from the STAR Protocol to measure the extent to which the classrooms observed exhibited *Culturally Responsive* teaching and learning. Half of the Indicators ($n=2$) focused on teachers assuring the purpose of the lesson was clear and relevant to all students and assuring the classroom was a positive and challenging environment. The other half ($n=2$) focused on students demonstrating a meaningful personal connection to the lesson and experiencing learning activities that were adapted to meet the needs of diverse learners. The 4-point scoring scale represents the extent to which *Culturally Responsive* teaching and learning is evident during an observation period. The Indicator and Component scales range from 1-Not Observable to 4-Clearly Observable. The Overall score represents the extent to which the overall teaching and learning practices observed were aligned with cultural responsiveness. The 4-point scale ranges from 1-Not at All, 2-Very Little, 3-Somewhat, and 4-Very.

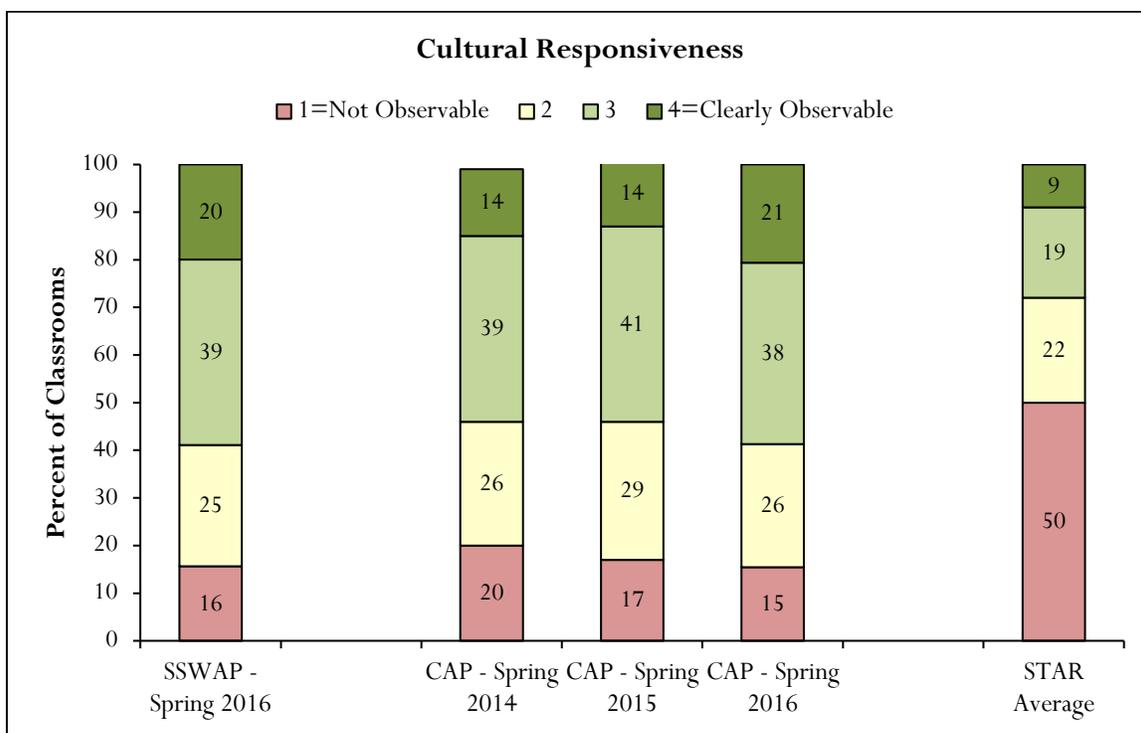


Figure 15

Central Arts Pathway

Researchers observed evidence of *Culturally Responsive* practice in 59% of the CAP classrooms they visited in 2016 compared to 55% in 2015 (Figure 15). This is 31 percentage-points higher than the STAR average, and a 4-point increase from the prior year. An analysis of the individual Indicators (Table 9) showed that 55% of students were observed working collaboratively with peers, and in 86% of classrooms teachers were observed providing a safe, positive learning environment for all learners. While the lowest scoring indicator continued to be Indicator 8, 2016 scores do reflect an 11-point increase from the previous data collection in 2015. Opportunities for students to meaningfully connect to lessons can empower those students to share their own knowledge and experiences with their peers and teachers.

Table 9.

CENTRAL ARTS PATHWAY - CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS	1	2	3	4
7. Teacher assures that the purpose of the lesson is clear and relevant to all students.	15%	32%	38%	15%
			53%	
8. Students demonstrate a meaningful personal connection to the lesson.	29%	30%	27%	14%
			41%	
10. Teacher assures the classroom is a positive and challenging academic environment.	2%	13%	51%	35%
			86%	
11. Students work collaboratively to provide social, peer-support for learning.	16%	29%	37%	18%
			55%	

South-Southwest Arts Pathway

During base-line data collections, researchers observed evidence of *culturally responsive* practice in 59% of classrooms (Table 10) in the SSWAP. Similar to the CAP observations, the highest scoring Indicators in the SSWAP were Indicators 10 and 11. Teachers were observed creating a positive and challenging learning environment in 83% of classrooms, and students were seen working collaboratively with peers 62% of the time. Additionally, students were observed demonstrating a meaningful connection to the lesson in 43% of classrooms, representing the lowest scoring Indicator in the SSWAP.

Table 10.

SOUTH-SOUTHWEST ARTS PATHWAY - CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS	1	2	3	4
7. Teacher assures that the purpose of the lesson is clear and relevant to all students.	15%	37%	35%	13%
			48%	
8. Students demonstrate a meaningful personal connection to the lesson.	34%	23%	33%	10%
			43%	
10. Teacher assures the classroom is a positive and challenging academic environment.	1%	16%	52%	31%
			83%	
11. Students work collaboratively to provide social, peer-support for learning.	13%	26%	37%	25%
			62%	



Barriers to Implementation

In addition to the many strengths and successes of The Creative Advantage Initiative, program stakeholders identified barriers to implementation during focus groups and interviews across the CAP and SSWAP schools. These include school level staff turn-over, initiative buy-in, time, and communication. Additionally, issues of sustainability were frequently addressed, as a barrier, but also as a promising practice.

Staff turn over

Throughout the spring, program stakeholders in both pathways referenced teacher and administrative turnover as a potential barrier to the successful school level implementation of The Creative Advantage. One teacher noted, “**(communication) is a challenge with so much staff turn-over. There are fliers and e-mails, but many of the new staff don’t know what it is. This needs to be a whole school opportunity, not just a select few knowing about it.**” Another stated, “It is just hard to communicate the initiative with the whole school when there is so much turn over from year to year.” This challenge was also mentioned as a barrier in the Year 2 evaluation report. Information provided by SPS shows that four of the fifteen administrators in the CAP were new in 2015, and two more are transitioning into CAP in 2016. This represents a 40% transition in school based leadership during the course of the initiative.

Initiative Buy-in

For any program or initiative to be successful, all essential stakeholders must believe in, and understand, the vision and mission of that program (Feldhaus et al., 2015). While many focus group participants reported seeing the value and understanding the connections between their individual school’s vision and instructional practices being implemented as a result of the The Creative Advantage, many others saw teacher, and administrator buy-in as a significant barrier to implementation. For example, one arts team member spoke freely during the spring focus group, noting, “In our building, it would be great if this was considered a standing committee. We need the administration to understand the purpose. Our principal doesn’t see that. She sees it as more fluff. It is not fluff.” Another teacher shared, “Buy in for teachers is hard. They are overwhelmed with test scores. As a low performing school, administration is focused on reading, writing, and math. I don’t blame them. But even though they are reluctant, they do realize it is better for kids to focus on the arts, not just reading, writing, and math.”

Initiative Fatigue

During another arts team focus group, one team leader introduced the term “initiative fatigue”, explaining that several teachers in the building feel overwhelmed by competing opportunities. While several teachers shared similar concerns, they all acknowledged that these initiatives were in the best interest of the students’ being served. One noted, however, “Teacher exhaustion is a huge barrier. To demonstrate significant growth with a high poverty population and students in transition, and with such pressure on math and literacy growth, changing curriculum, teachers are spent. There does seem to be some openness, but also a little fear about what they don’t already know or feel good about teaching.” Finally, one teacher eloquently communicated the feelings expressed by several others during focus groups across the CAP: “Having such a standardized testing culture, teachers need to feel it is o.k., and need to learn how to integrate it (arts) into the curriculum.”

Time

Concerns regarding the amount of time associated with The Creative Advantage initiative was addressed during multiple focus groups, from both administrators and teachers. At the school level, administrators expressed concern about scheduling time for the arts in master schedules already saturated with core content. Administrators also acknowledged the amount of time required to plan and execute relationships with arts partners, noting that often there was just no additional time for this. At the classroom and student level, teachers expressed concerns about addressing all of the required content while also including meaningful time for their students to experience and prioritize the arts. One arts team leader shared, “Time for the arts is an issue. Projects take time...” Another noted, “People feel so pressured to get core curriculum in. If they could see how the arts would drive some of that it wouldn’t seem like such a daunting task. Also, some people might be blocked from incorporating the arts since they are not familiar, or don’t feel like experts.”

Another barrier addressed was the need for time to train and plan art lessons, particularly when incorporating the use of unfamiliar techniques and materials. Many teachers expressed feeling pressed for time to plan, leaving them feeling unprepared, and compromising the integrity and meaningfulness of the lessons. A few focus group participants suggested that this issue might be addressed as the school cultures transition from seeing the arts as an extra to the arts as core content.

Communication

While perceptions of school level communication seemed to be more positive during the 2015-2016 focus groups, there were several non-arts teachers throughout school communities that expressed a limited understanding of the direct impact of The Creative Advantage on students in their school building. One teacher noted, “I’ve heard people ask, “what’s The Creative Advantage?” It feels like more than one initiative, and I only have room for things I can grasp onto. There is ambiguity. If a team is not sure right away, then the staff is not going to know. They won’t realize the potential of it.” Across both pathways, when asked questions about arts partnerships and opportunities provided to students, many respondents acknowledged they had no idea how and why decisions were made, or were completely unaware of the existence of a partnership roster. Additionally, concerns about parent and community level understanding were more prevalent during focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders. One school administrator suggested, “There is not a lot of awareness of the initiative within the community. Internal and external messaging needs to be a part of our goal.” Another clearly stated, “The majority of families in our community would have no idea what The Creative Advantage initiative is.”

Sustainability

Questions regarding sustainability were initiated by school level stakeholders in both pathways. One participant asked, “What happens when the initiative is over? We don’t have a lot of control over that, and we know it ends in three years. Even if we create a sustainable framework, we can’t control what happens.” Another shared, “The funding is a little scary. We wish we knew it would be more consistent.” Program leaders continue to maintain a focus on creating sustainability. Discussions of partnerships and funding are a consistent part of the year-long strategic planning meetings. One program leader noted, “(we) continue to seek funding to help jump start or push along these specific goals we have.” Additionally, Creative Advantage newsletters consistently



address this issue, with program leaders providing suggestions and support for schools interested in finding additional funding opportunities in the future.

Program leaders and school level participants also expressed the need to shift the culture of schools to include the arts as core content, not “fluff”, thereby increasing overall support, and minimizing concerns about the ability for arts funding in an economic downturn. One teacher shared, “Having art is not just something we bring into the classroom, but have classroom teachers bring it into their own daily practice. We don’t want our teachers to have to choose between teaching social skills, arts, and meaningful curriculum.” Program leaders address this in their short video clip on the Seattle Channel in December 2015, suggesting that art should be sustainable because it is included in the State’s description of basic education, and is the right of every child in the district.

Promising Practices

What are the emerging promising practices?

With two cohorts fully underway, several promising practices have emerged, including the nature of the initiative, communication tools, school planning processes and supports, funding strategies, policy change, and evaluation reporting.

Collective Partnership

Program leaders have been clear in communicating The Creative Advantage as an initiative, a plan, and a partnership, not a grant. This is a unique and strong aspect of the project. The City of Seattle and Seattle Public Schools are working in a partnership to bring about sustainable systemic change. As a result of the work already, there has been an increased awareness and discussion of the arts at the district and school levels. One focus group participant shared, “The potential is huge for our school. Arts are something the students are invested in, and the community has advocated for. Creative Advantage has helped to negotiate, and act as a leverage point.” Another noted, “It is great for our [young people] to be exposed to the arts. There is lots of research on brain development, and the arts give [young people] something else they can be good at. They are an outlet for ideas and creativity...kids are definitely more engaged in projects, and are very proud of their artwork.” Similarly, one teacher contributed “I’ve seen more art happening in the classroom. People feel more permission to incorporate it.” “Art is something to enhance education, not take away. We love it.”

Communication Tools

The Creative Advantage newsletters are an excellent means for communication to the schools in each pathway. They contain clear and valuable information for all school and community stakeholders interested in learning about, participating in, and advancing the efforts of the initiative. Newsletters include information about current processes and expectations, professional development opportunities, community arts partnerships, and events and happenings in schools and throughout Seattle. Additionally, program leaders provide clear timelines and information about program components to support fidelity implementation. Arts team leaders and administrators should continue to make every effort to share these newsletters with teachers at the school level,

and with parents and community members when appropriate to further support the initiative and increase awareness.

Planning Process and Support

Teachers and administrators found the support from their dedicated Arts Leadership Coach - mentor principal universally helpful. Many shared how surprised they were by the value of the process. During focus groups school stakeholders felt the time went “almost too quickly”, although the majority also noted the success in creating actionable goals and plans for implementation. Additionally, pathway schools assign an Arts Team Coordinator during the implementation stage of the initiative. This person is provided an additional stipend, and is responsible for maintaining communication with project leaders, sharing important information with their school and community members, and supporting the components of The Creative Advantage initiative. The role is critical in furthering the understanding and mission of this initiative.

Funding Strategies

Much of the funding for The Creative Advantage has been targeted at the elementary schools, with the intention of providing increased minutes of arts in elementary school to drive a market demand for more arts offerings at the middle school and high school levels. Program leaders have suggested that equity exposure to the arts for all students throughout the city is a primary focus of The Creative Advantage, with the process beginning at the primary level. This strategy was chosen for the CAP, and after some discussion was also determined to be the best fit for the SSWAP. Clear communication detailing the funding at each stage of the process is included in pathway newsletters.

System Changes

The Creative Advantage has led to systemic change. During discussions about shifts in staffing requirements at the district level, one program leader noted, “This is the hope, with systemic support, (that) the district reaches our staffing goals. The roll out method is intended to create an arts rich culture at every school. That is what will be sustainable beyond FTE. If we change the cultures in the schools, then maybe we will be able to sustain those economic downturns.” Changes made to the 2016-2017 Gold Book⁶ reflect these hopes. The language for hiring PCP teachers now states,

When hiring *new* Preparation-Conference-Planning (PCP) teachers, the Weighted Staffing Standards (WSS) PCP allocations must be used for physical education, music, or visual arts teachers, and not courses such as technology or world languages. This change is necessary to meet Washington State Basic Education requirements for core academic subjects...

Example: A school is allocated 2.0 FTE PCP. A Spanish teacher is leaving. Physical education (PE) is embedded into the day without using WSS PCP allocations. Music is already one of the WSS PCP teachers. Hire a visual arts teacher for the open WSS PCP allocation.

⁶ The Gold Book is the document outlining the School Budget Development Instructions for Seattle Public Schools.



The Gold Book also includes the *recommended* minutes for arts and music (60 minutes per week for each discipline)⁷

In addition to changes with staffing requirements in favor of the arts, there are more discussions district wide about the value of the arts in education for all children. SPS is incorporating evidence based practice through the use of performance-based arts assessments, and are providing arts teachers the appropriate support to successfully implement these assessments. The Creative Advantage continues to work to promote the initiative and increase valuable arts partnerships and improve equity access for all students.

Evaluation Reporting

In year three, the evaluation team will produce up to five research briefs related to the evaluation. These research briefs are a strategic way to package and communicate important evaluation findings to all stakeholders at the school and community levels. Program leaders and evaluators are working collaboratively to identify these key findings and practices, and will continue to explore opportunities to share valuable aspects of the initiative to promote understanding and awareness throughout the life of the initiative.

Conclusions

In 2015-16, schools in the Central Arts Pathway continued implementing the vision and action plans they created during school-wide planning. Additionally, CAP schools continued to receive SPS central funding for K-5 music staff (pre-k-5 in the case of Bailey Gatzert Elementary School). These schools were given \$7500.00 each to develop community arts partnerships and increase access to quality arts education for all learners. Funds in the CAP were used to introduce students to dance, theater, music, spoken word, and visual arts from vetted individuals and arts organizations throughout Seattle. Teachers and administrators in the Central Arts Pathway continued to express support for the initiative, and were able to provide concrete examples of how the arts impact students within their own buildings, and throughout the community.

At the same time, the South-Southwest Arts Pathway entered its school-wide planning year. In these schools, administrators and teachers were impressed with the scope and vision of Creative Advantage program leaders, and demonstrated an understanding of the purpose and goals of the initiative as a whole. Overall, stakeholders reported satisfaction with the support provided during their facilitated planning, and were impressed with the knowledge of their principal mentors. However, during interviews and focus groups teachers and administrators expressed some confusion on funding, timelines, and sustainability of the arts after the conclusion of the initiative.

Program newsletters unique to each pathway, and professional development opportunities for all interested teachers in the district, were provided to support the initiative, and program leaders made significant efforts to communicate the overall goals of the Creative Advantage at the school and district levels.

⁷ SPS research shows that in order for students to meet standard in music and visual arts they need a minimum of 60 minutes.

Focus groups and interviews with stakeholders revealed positive and negative contextual factors affecting the program. While many stakeholders were excited about the relationships they were building with arts partners from the roster, some continued to express frustration with the pre-vetted list of teaching artists and the time required to establish and maintain contracts with those community partners. Additionally, issues of sustainability and confusion about funding continued to be on the minds of administrators and arts teams throughout both pathways. While many stakeholders saw the intrinsic value in increasing access to the arts, they were cautious about buy-in at school and district levels, and acknowledged that a culture shift would be necessary for sustainable change to truly be possible. Many teachers also shared their struggle to balance competing initiatives, noting the challenge of supporting students in a time of high accountability, specifically regarding test scores of traditionally academic subjects.

Similar to last year, the initiative continues to be distinguished by three emerging promising practices: increasing relationships with community arts partners throughout the city, strong support for school level planning and vision building, and a fundamental belief in equity for all students throughout the city of Seattle. The collaboration between the district, the city, and the community arts partners allows all of the stakeholders to organize their efforts around arts learning. Program leaders continue to provide support for the initiative, and are planning to increase the reach of The Creative Advantage into a new pathway this fall.



Recommendations

In order to build upon strengths, and support areas of need, we suggest The Creative Advantage Initiative consider the following recommendations:

Explore and analyze middle and high school course offering policies and protocols.

During the regional planning year, program stakeholders should be clear about the focus of support, and resources available, at the elementary level. During this planning, leaders should also determine the course registration process for students in the middle and high schools. Without clarifying and setting enrollment projections, goals, and expectations early, the plan for creating more experience and interest in the arts in elementary may not grow to fruition at the secondary level. We recommend that each region explore, determine, and revise (if necessary) secondary course taking policies to accommodate the (hopeful) increase in demand for arts classes at the secondary level.

Encourage Clear Communication at the School, Family, and Community Level

Representatives from both pathways remained uncertain about program components, funding, and deadlines. Interviews and focus groups revealed that while communication within schools appears to be improving, there is still a lack of basic awareness about The Creative Advantage at the parent and community levels.

Program leaders have developed comprehensive newsletters to disseminate information to each pathway, yet very few focus group participants referenced these resources. Within each building, arts team leaders should take responsibility for communicating the information in The Creative Advantage newsletters throughout the school and community, either by printing pertinent information and posting it to a school bulletin board, or sending e-mail links throughout the year. We highly recommend that the Arts Team Coordinators work with the building principal to secure time on a staff meeting agenda to process information in the newsletters. This process will very likely lead to a clearer understanding of the initiative and the types of supports that are available.

Likewise, providing access for families provides another way to build foundational knowledge of the scope of The Creative Advantage, creating awareness that will help to reinforce and stabilize the initiative regardless of transitions in staff at the school level. We recommend the principals pass along information to families in their own newsletters that highlight the work of The Creative Advantage. A parent volunteer or PTSA liaison would also be helpful in spreading awareness and knowledge about the expansive reach of the initiative. In future planning, program leaders should continue to prioritize clear communication to all stakeholders.

Arts Team Coordinators

The Arts Team Coordinators should take an active and aggressive role in disseminating information from The Creative Advantage newsletters, Seattle Channel in December 2015, and annual evaluations out to their Art Leadership Team and to their respective staffs.

Involve Students in the Process

One of the most significant aspects of 21st Century learning involves the active and engaged participation from the students themselves. Many of the skills and indicators that support Powerful Teaching and Learning include student voice, student collaboration, and students making meaningful connections to lessons. Students were influential in the creation of NOVA High School and Interagency Southwest at Youngstown Cultural Arts Center, two participants in The Creative Advantage.

For The Creative Advantage, we recommend that program leaders identify and develop opportunities for students to express their understanding of, and feelings about, the initiative, and the impact The Creative Advantage is having on their experience in school. Program leaders could create a student survey, have informal student focus groups, or create question/ answer opportunities for students to respond creatively. For example, Arts teachers might be encouraged to provide exit tickets once a quarter asking students to tell one thing they are learning through the arts, or one thing they would like to learn.

Incorporate Lessons Learned from Similar Initiatives

In a recent NAEA in-service titled *BYAEP and Beyond: The Past, Current and Future Needs of Youth Arts Organizations Using Data to Inform Program Impact*, program leaders of the Boston Youth Arts Evaluation Project shared best practices related to data gathering and measurement for youth-serving arts organizations. Program leaders led into the webinar with a quote, “Measure what you value, and others will value what you measure.” During this one hour on-line webinar, several suggestions were made, including:

- Make sure to focus on moving from data collection to building a solid framework for the arts.
- Take time to talk, and process, the main goals of the initiative to really understand them, and to be sure they are aligned with what you want to see.
- Use a pre/ post evaluation tool for students, so program leaders can look at what the students believe about how the arts impact them.
- Incorporate a mentor program, bringing alumni back (at the high school level) to share how the arts
- have impacted them after school....
- Try to “right size data” to keep it user friendly and accessible to all community stakeholders.

Provide More Time for Teacher and Pathway Collaboration

During focus groups and observations in both pathways, teachers and administrators spoke to the value of learning from, and with, peers. One teacher shared, “It would be better to be able to collaborate with the teachers around providing an artistic perspective in math, reading, and writing. Can you imagine if we could actually plan together?!” and another commented, “Maybe we could have an opportunity to talk to other pathway schools already implementing to assess how they are using the funds.” Although it seems these opportunities may already be in place, it was unclear whether arts team leaders and members were aware of them, or had time to access them. We recommend providing opportunities for new schools, and teachers, to participate in learning



walks within established programs. We also suggest building in collaborative planning time with novice and veteran teachers working together to share ideas.

Targeted Resources and Professional Development for Sustainability

One arts team leader suggested, “if they compiled a list of free resources for schools; things that are sustainable...our teachers have great buy-in with art, but it is still one more thing they need to research. It becomes one of those things people wait until the last minute to plan for”. “we would like research around student success and the connect with the arts, to keep reminding parents of the connections and value.” Despite a comprehensive offering of professional development, some teachers did express concerns during interviews and focus groups, suggesting that a focus for professional development should be on differentiating the trainings for teachers at all levels of implementation, from those new to the initiative to those more with more veteran status.

Continue to Communicate the Message that the Arts are a Part of Basic Education

One program leader shared, “As much as possible, in this report and in our communications, we want to state that arts is part of basic education; not additional, but required.” All program stakeholders should continue to find ways to communicate this message, within school buildings, communities, and the city of Seattle.

References

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The BERC Group, Inc.
22232 - 17th Ave. SE Suite 305
Bothell, WA 98021
Phone: 425.486.3100

Web: www.bercgroup.com