

Adaptation, Integration, and the Arts Research Project 2014-2017 Executive Summary



Ohio | Department
of Education

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— 2016-2017 —



**Measurement
Resources**

Measurement moves missions

Introduction

VSA Ohio's Adaptation, Integration and the Arts (AIA) partners teaching artists and educators in inclusive classrooms to enhance teaching and learning through an arts-integrated residency and curriculum.

By bringing together teachers and students of all abilities, VSAO provides a unique opportunity to experience the power of the arts to support student achievement, creativity, innovation and effective teaching and learning. The AIA program is fully inclusive, accessible, and supports a complete education for all learners. VSAO began the AIA program in 2003. Since then, AIA has grown in scope, funding, effectiveness, efficiency, and equity.

AIA defines three primary objectives through arts-integrated classroom residencies:

1. Children with and without disabilities will increase achievement levels.
2. Children with and without disabilities will be better prepared for life, work, and post-secondary education.
3. General, special, and arts educators will be better prepared to support learning and inclusion for students with and without disabilities.

AIA prioritizes student achievement, preparedness for life, critical thinking skills, innovation, high-quality teaching, community engagement, and accountability. In participating schools who applied to the annual open Call for Classrooms progress, these provide equal learning opportunities and benefits for general and special-education students of all ages and diversities across Ohio.

Recent evaluation studies of VSAO's AIA residency program, conducted by independent research firm Measurement Resources Company (MRC), **provide evidence that students with and without disabilities are experiencing significant growth and engagement throughout the residency.** Administrators, teachers, and teaching artists all have positive perceptions of the AIA program and see value in the program as a partner in education with the school.

This report highlights the results of three years of evaluation studies during the 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 school years.

VSA Ohio

VSA Ohio (VSAO) is the state organization on arts and disability whose mission is to make the arts and arts education more accessible and inclusive for people with any disability and their support networks.

VSAO is a community that connects inspired artists with their passion, service providers with resources, and all citizens with creative opportunities. VSAO brings art and inspiration to galleries, classrooms and other community settings across the state of Ohio.

www.vsao.org/aia

Examining the Impact of Adaptation, Integration, and the Arts

VSA Ohio commissioned annual quantitative and qualitative evaluations of the AIA program to assess the attitudes and experiences of teachers, teaching artists, administrators, and students as it relates to impacts on educational opportunities, quality of experiences, individual growth, and community connections. Throughout the three school years of independent evaluation of the AIA program, key research questions included:

1. **What is the impact of integrated arts education opportunities on students with disabilities, students without disabilities, educators, and schools?**
2. **Do changes in students' social-emotional skills occur throughout the residency?**
3. **Does standardized test performance (or applicable Life Skills scores) change throughout the residency?**
4. **What characteristics make a high-quality residency?**

Evaluation Overview

MRC utilized a mixed-method design to assess the impact of integrated arts education on multiple outcomes. Quantitative and qualitative evaluation and impact data were collected annually from 2014 to 2017.

Teacher Surveys

Teachers completed pre- and post-test surveys designed by MRC to measure teachers' perceptions of their students' skills and behaviors at the beginning and the end of the program. Teachers provided feedback of the perceived outcomes and impacts of the program and their recommendations for improvement.

Administrator Surveys

Administrators completed an electronic survey at the completion of the residency every year. This assessed the perceived benefits and values of the AIA program for their school.

Teaching Artist Surveys, Residency Plans, and Checklists

Teaching artists created a residency plan at the beginning of the program that outlined the goals for the residency. Throughout the program, teaching artists provided qualitative data regarding student and teaching artist impact, residency plan progress, and their assessment of the residency.

Examples of Student Work and Media

Teaching artists and classroom teachers provided song lyrics, visual artwork, stories, and plays that resulted from the residencies.

Standardized Student Test Data

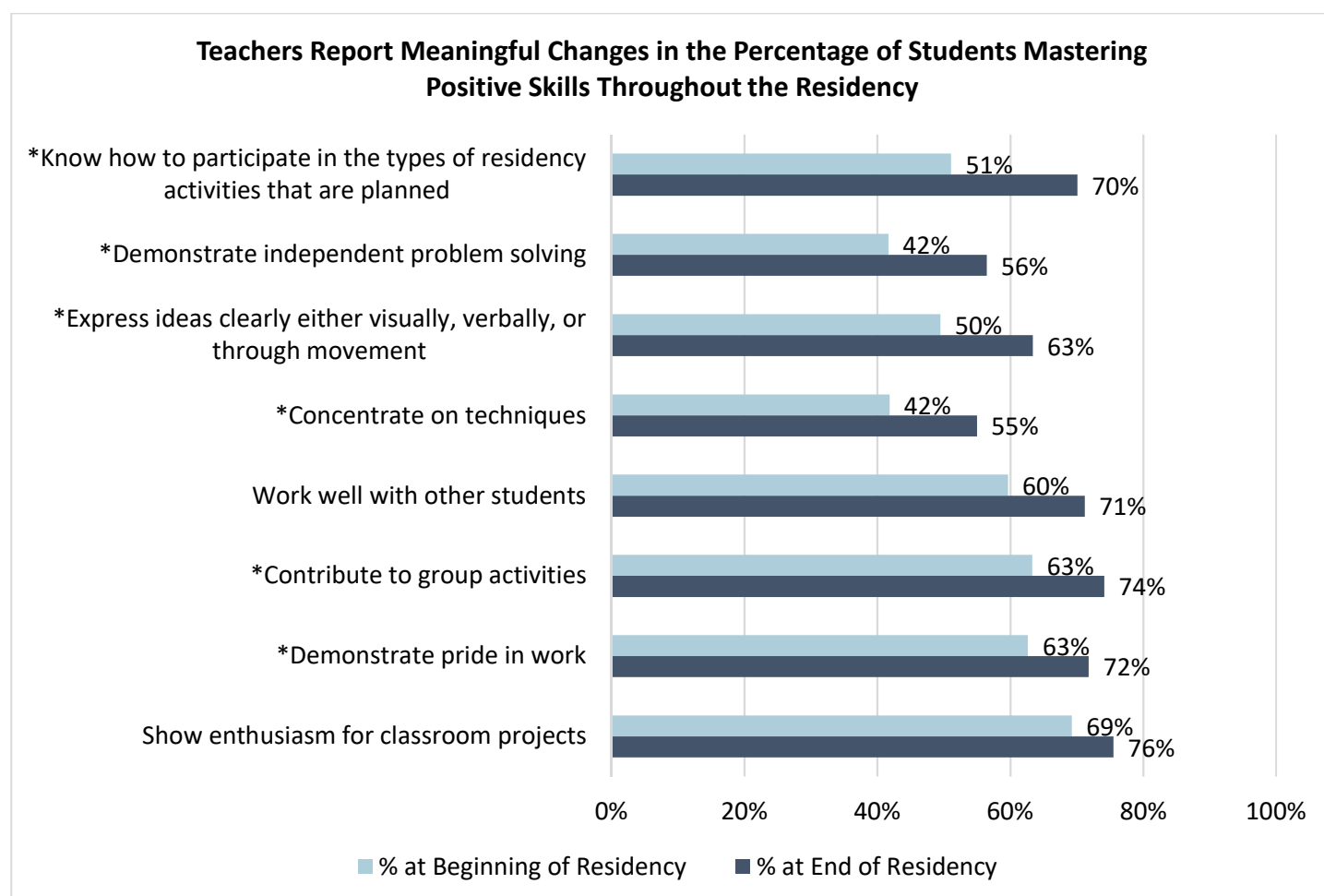
Standardized reading scores of students participating in the AIA program were obtained from local school districts to assess whether participation in the program impacts their literacy scores. Reading scores for a control group of students not participating in the AIA program were also obtained for a comparative analysis.

Integrated Arts Education Impacts Students

AIA's integrated arts education instructional strategies are effectively engaging students to improve their academic, personal, and social skills. Results of three years of independent evaluation of the AIA program demonstrate that the program is achieving many of its desired goals by producing positive and meaningful impacts for students.

Teachers Report Increases in Students' Cognitive, Personal, and Social Skills

Teachers reported how they observed students' behaviors change during the AIA program. Specifically, teachers estimated the percentage of their students who had mastered positive cognitive, personal, and social skills at the beginning and end of the residency. During two consecutive years, teachers reported statistically meaningful and positive changes in the percentage of students who had mastered these specific skills, especially knowing how to participate in the residency activities (19% improvement). Meaningful improvements in independent problem solving, idea expression, and concentration were also observed by teachers. Five of the seven student skills significantly improved and were found to have a medium effect size (.5 or higher), indicating a significant and meaningful difference between beginning and end. The other two skills have a smaller effect size, (.2 or higher), though still significant.

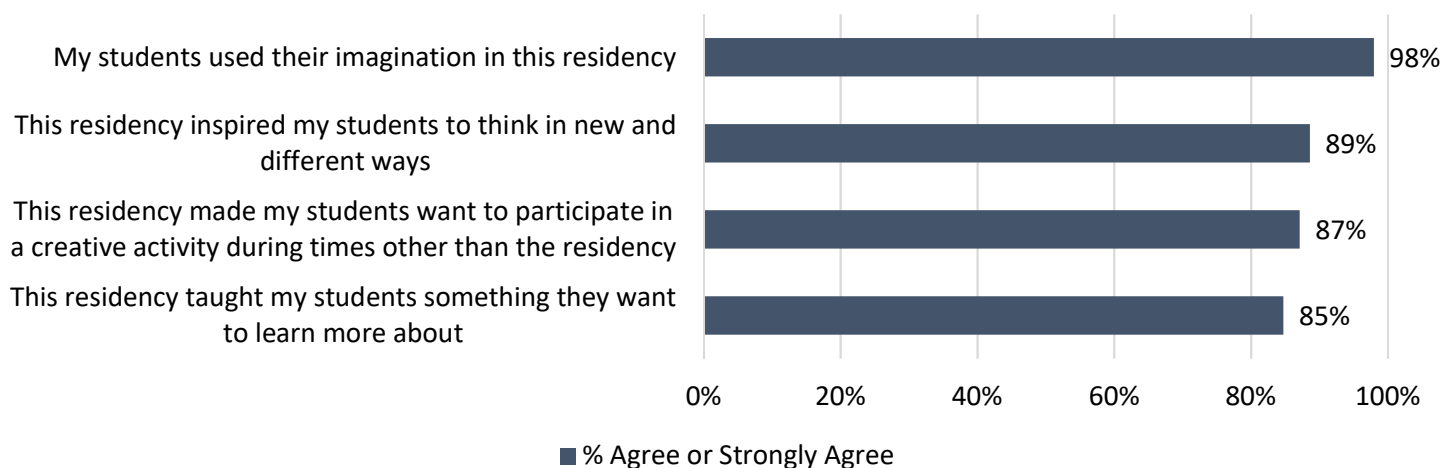


Note. Items with an asterisk (*) were found to have a medium effect size (.5 or higher), indicating a significant and meaningful difference between beginning and end. All items have at least a small effect size (.2 or higher).

Students Show Improved Creativity Outcomes

More than 8 in 10 teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their students were engaged creatively during the AIA residency. Teachers perceive that the AIA program is effective at teaching students something they want to learn more about, making their students want to participate in a creative activity during times other than the residency, and using imagination during the residency. These skills are all aligned with the definition of creativity as a **21st Century learning skill**.

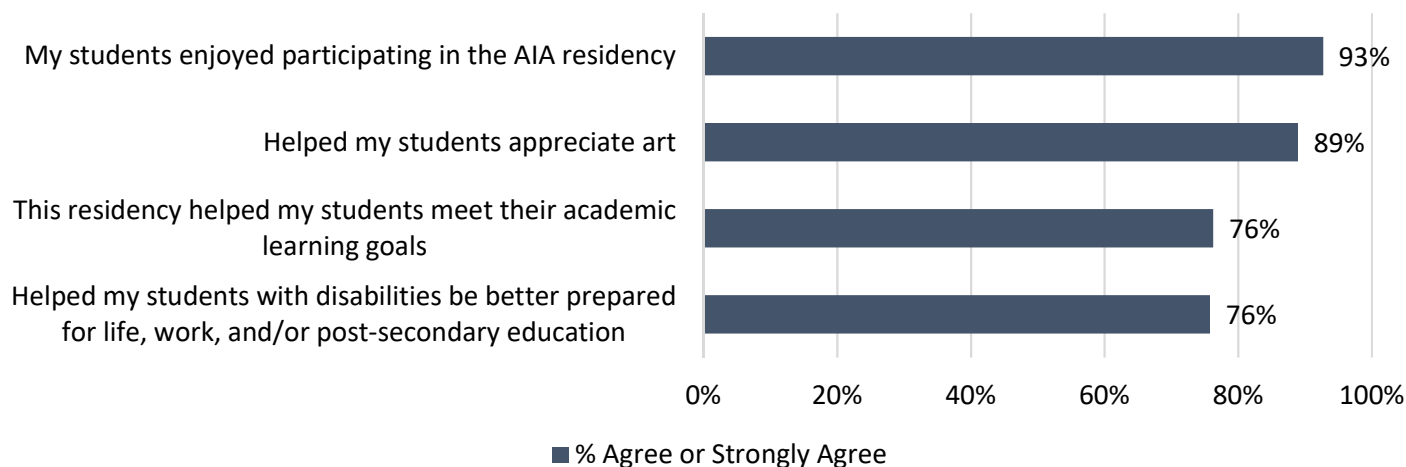
Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Creativity Outcomes



Students Show Positive Social, Academic, and Personal Outcomes

Teachers reported seeing many positive changes in students throughout the residency. Nearly all teachers (93%) agreed or strongly agreed that their students enjoyed participating in the AIA residency (social outcome) and that the AIA residency helped the students to appreciate art (89% agreement, academic outcome). Three-fourths of teachers also believed the residency helped students meet their academic learning goals (academic outcome) and their students with disabilities were specifically better prepared for life, work, and/or post-secondary education due to the residency (personal outcome). It is clear that **teachers see many direct and positive impacts on their students who participate in the AIA residency**.

Teachers' Perceptions of Student Outcomes



IN EDUCATORS' OWN WORDS

"The program helps build students' ability to focus and increase attention span which carries over to their academic goals. In addition, the program builds their communication and social skills, allowing them to participate in the community, which is our ultimate school goal."

– Director of Education, Specialty School

"I have a student who is painfully shy and quiet who really shined through this residency. She was able to open up, gain confidence and use her voice more than she ever has."

– Intervention Specialist, Kindergarten

"The set was wooden sawhorses. Daniel became alive with action. He spirited the rest of the kids by jumping clear over the sawhorse to make his character come alive. Drama and Daniel became a force that led others to bring art into the arena of literacy."

– Teacher, Fifth Grade



Student Outcomes of a Successful AIA Residency:

- Academic, Cognitive, Personal, and Social Improvements
- Improved life skills
- Improved creativity outcomes and 21st Century learning skills
- Behavioral improvements

Unique Value to Students of Specialty Schools

Specialty School Students Improved in Life Skills, Communication, and Social-Emotional Skills

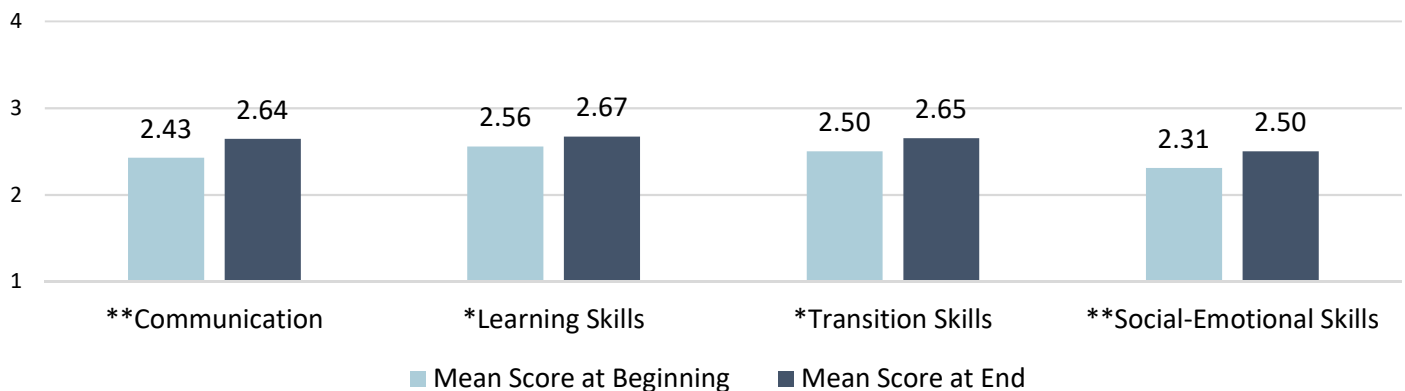
Students with disabilities are a primary target audience of AIA. Teachers in Specialty Schools, such as Board of Developmental Disabilities or Educational Service Centers, completed individual assessments of students to collect data on students' perceived gains in a variety of life skills¹ throughout the AIA residency. These criteria aligned to four subscales: Communication, Learning Skills, Transition Skills, and Social-Emotional Skills.

Specialty School students who were assessed by teachers showed significant, positive growth in all four subscales of the Life Skills Assessment.²

The greatest magnitude of change from beginning to end of the AIA residency was observed in students' communication skills and social-emotional skills. This shows support that participating in the AIA residency may increase students' soft skills by a meaningful amount.



Specialty School Students Show Improvements in Life Skills throughout the AIA Residency



Note. Items with an asterisk (*) are statistically significant at $p < .05$. Double asterisks (**) indicate statistical significance at $p < .01$.

¹ This tool was an adaptation of the Life Skills Assessment developed and used by a participating AIA residency site. Mean scores are calculated based on subscales ratings of varying numbers of items on 4-point Likert scale: 1 = requires hand-over-hand assistance to complete the skill; 2 = requires verbal prompts to complete the skill; 3 = can do the skill most of the time with no prompts; 4 = independent mastery of the skill.

² A paired samples t-test was performed on the total scores for the four subscales measuring the difference from beginning to end. Significant differences were found for all four subscales: Communication – ($t(301) = 4.32, p = 0.00$); Learning Skills – ($t(305) = 2.41, p = 0.02$); Transition Skills – ($t(304) = 2.40, p = 0.02$); Social-Emotional Skills – ($t(292) = 3.59, p = 0.00$).

IN EDUCATORS' OWN WORDS

"It has been one of the best experiences that our students have ever had. The visual art opportunities helped our students explore different mediums, which is challenging for many with autism." – Director of Educational Services, Specialty School

"I had the opportunity to see a child who is very limited physically respond to this experience. His body doesn't move like everyone else's, but dance is his language!"
– Creative Arts Specialist, Pre-Kindergarten

During the 2016-2017 evaluation, teachers and teaching artists in Board of Developmental Disabilities or Educational Service Centers reported more favorable perceptions of residency quality and effectiveness than those in Public and Private Schools. Students with disabilities in these Specialty Schools also showed growth on the Life Skills Assessment. AIA residencies may be a natural fit in Specialty Schools where students with disabilities may be especially receptive to the artistically adapted curriculum.

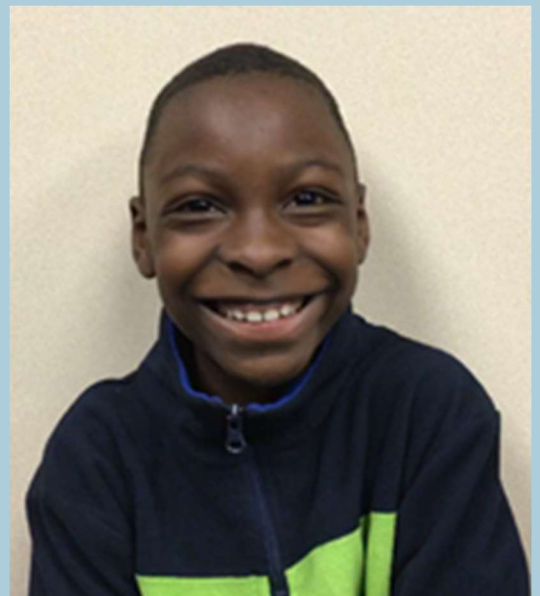


Donald's Story

Donald has come leaps and bounds since the start of the residency. He is a little boy with a ton of energy, great sense of humor and a twin brother that he is constantly in competition with socially. Although the two are in separate classes the struggle for attention is very distracting to classmates and to Donald's ability to actively engage and learn classroom materials.

Donald has an active IEP that highlights goals for reading comprehension, task-oriented behaviors, impulse control, active engagement and following directives. Donald thrived on consistency in how the class was structured and also how behavioral expectations can be met. The class allowed Donald to physically engage, calm his body and actively engage outside of his desk.

Donald has improved in his impulse control and demand for attention. The element of performance is largely focused on self-confidence, taking risk and supporting fellow community members. After one of the first class performances, Donald focused all of that vivacious energy and was a star performer. The intersection of a structured movement class, performance and core curriculum-based lessons was the perfect environment for Donald to shine.



Isaac's Story

Isaac has come leaps and bounds since the start of the residency. He is a little boy who is deaf. He uses a cochlear implant device, FM transmitter and has an interpreter with him at all times throughout the day. Typically, individuals who are deaf have apprehensions to volunteer to answer questions or assume a special role; for fear that they may not fully understand what is asked of them. This was the case with Isaac.

During the residency, sign language was integrated daily through activities, songs and dances. At the heart of all residencies is deep collaboration. With the teaching artist, interpreter and most importantly the student, Isaac, working together the ability to communicate with each other became more and more effective.

Most recently, during our lesson on dance production, many common idioms heard in the performing arts such as “break a leg” or “knock them dead” were introduced and assessed by looking at literal and non-literal.

Isaac has gained more than just an understanding of idioms or the processes of production. The most important takeaway has been his increased confidence and willingness to participate and identify elements of the performing arts that he connects with and feels comfortable executing. Magic happens both off stage and on. Isaac is a great example of that and is definitely a super star!

Student focused instruction was integral in achieving academic excellence and encouraging creative expression and artistry. Isaac didn't let his disability define his ability to explore and discover new ways of looking at the world and learning.



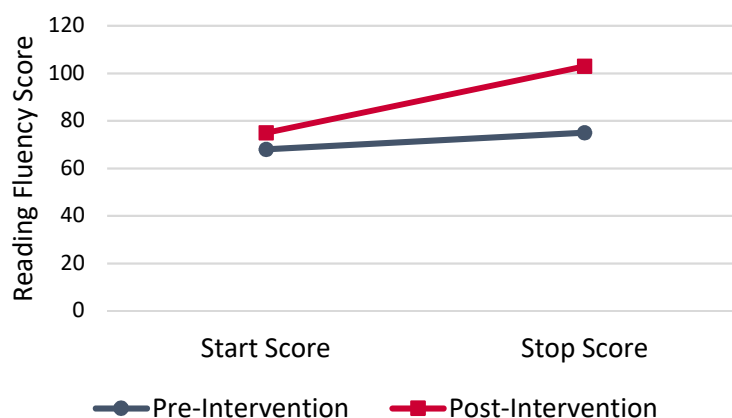
Mixed Results in Students' Standardized Test Improvements

Some Students Experienced Accelerated Rate of Learning in Language Arts Standards

During all three years of evaluation from 2014 to 2017, students' standardized tests scores, such as Measures of Academic Progress (MAP),³ were evaluated to examine whether the AIA program increased the rate of learning in language arts standards during the AIA residency.

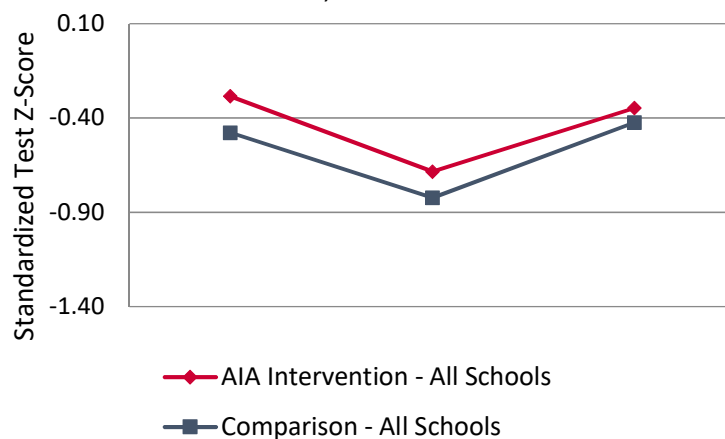
In the 2014-2015 AIA residency evaluation, a single-case design was chosen to compare the rate of change in reading fluency scores before the AIA program and after the AIA program. Results demonstrated the students experienced a faster rate of growth (an 18% improvement) in reading fluency per week during the AIA program compared to the rate of growth prior to the AIA program. However, because all students received the intervention at the same time it was not possible to rule out other factors that may have contributed to this increased rate of learning.

Students Demonstrated a Faster Rate of Growth in Reading Fluency during the AIA Program



In the 2015-2016 evaluation year, a nonequivalent groups design using a pretest-posttest assessment with intact groups for the treatment and control group was selected. Overall, the results suggested that participating in the AIA residency helped some students increase their language arts learning at a greater pace. Qualitative data from the teaching artists generally supported the overall student test data trends, such that the teaching artist who described the residency as a *“rich kinesthetic learning experience”* in which *“students immersed themselves in the stories by embodying characters, their traits, motivations or feelings”* was at an AIA Residency cite which showed significant and positive gains.

Some AIA Students Had Language Arts Learning at a Greater Pace, but Data are Limited



³ Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test data were requested from the school district's Division of Testing and Program Evaluation when available. Because school districts use different testing publishers to assess language arts standards, all individual student scores were converted to z-scores. A z-score is a measure of how many standard deviations below or above the population mean an individual score is. Students' increases and decreases in test scores are therefore converted to a common metric, allowing for comparisons across different test publishers, grade levels, and school districts.

In the 2016-2017 evaluation, the goal was again to see if the AIA program increased the rate of learning in language arts standards during the AIA residency. However, only two public and private schools receiving AIA residencies provided the required data to make this comparison. Therefore, qualitative data about residency quality and effectiveness was incorporated to help interpret changes in AIA residency and comparison school student data. Due to limited data, the AIA residency's influence on the accelerated rate of learning could not be concluded.

In future evaluations, an *a priori* link between the AIA residency content and cognitive gains, as measured by standardized language arts tests, would need to be established to justify expectations of significant group differences in standardized reading scores for AIA residency students.



AIA Residencies by the Numbers, 2014-2017

4,336

total students participated

38%

of participating students have disabilities

75 hours

average contact hours per student

10,584

indirect participants impacted



IN EDUCATORS' OWN WORDS

"Our teaching artist provided a wide range of knowledge and was able to give examples and hands-on examples. This was a powerful experience for the kids."

– Teacher, Second Grade

"Learning that one of my students had a true talent for art was very meaningful. He could copy the model on the board perfectly and really enjoyed getting hands-on with clay and paint. This is a nonverbal student that struggles to communicate. To learn this about him was very special because without the program, he would've never told us this on his own."

- Intervention Specialist, Pre-Kindergarten through 12th Grade, Specialty School

"A meaningful experience from the residency was not only building a solid partnership with the teaching artist for myself but also to see the connection between the teaching artist and my students develop. I try to prepare my students to connect with other people and I have taught them strategies to do so through art." – Teacher, Pre-Kindergarten, Specialty School



IN ADMINISTRATORS' OWN WORDS

"The program was an excellent way for our students to express and grow his or her own capabilities physically, mentally, and socially" – Principal, Specialty School

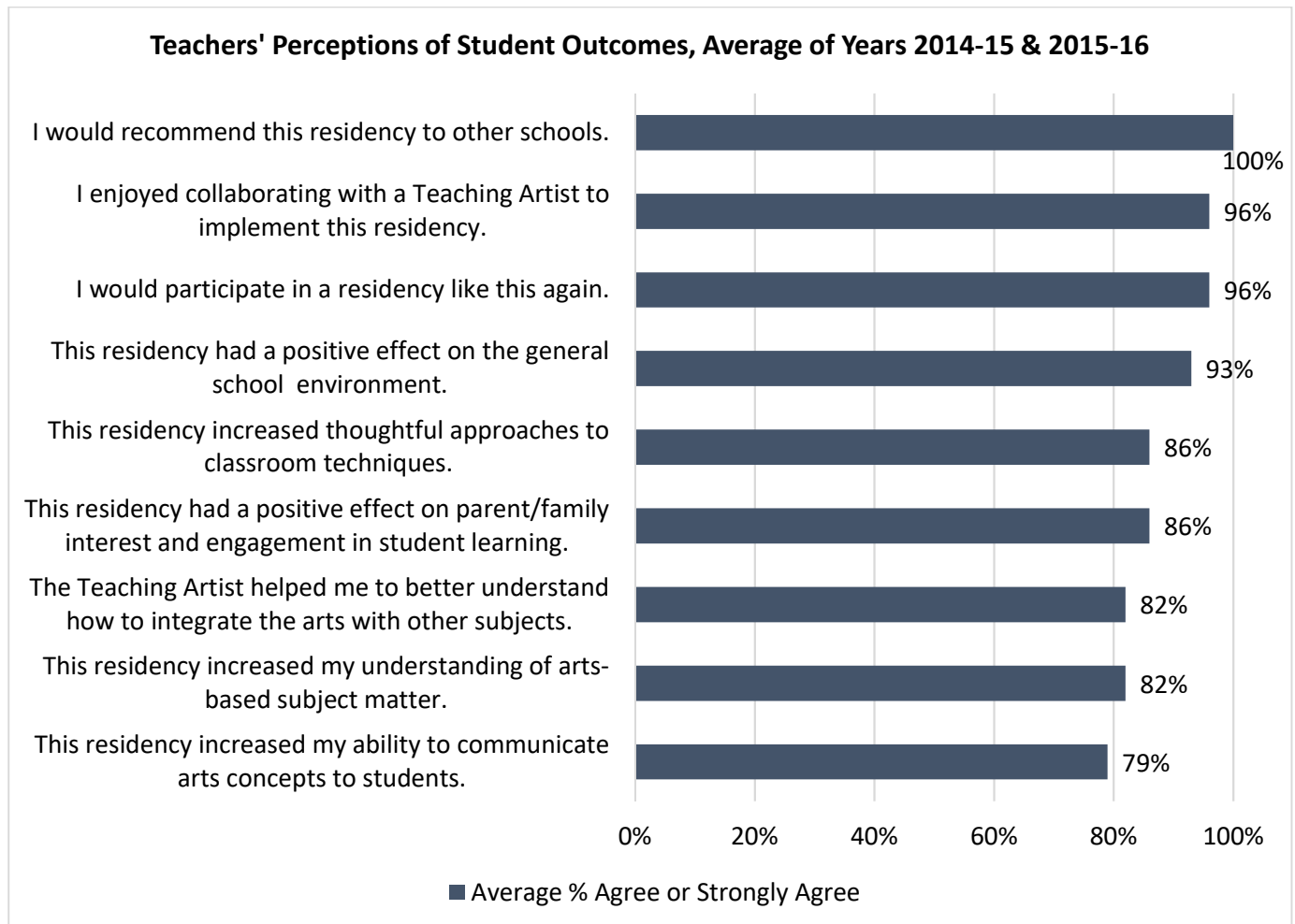
"The program boosted students' confidence levels regarding their academic performance. This was in stark contrast to where their confidence levels were before the program began. Classroom teachers also increased their confidence levels in meeting the academic needs of their students as a result of their active participation in the program." – Principal

Teachers Gain Professional Skills and Training

The AIA program also provides educator professional development. The program contains an array of formal and informal professional development opportunities designed to increase general, special, and arts educators' preparedness to use the arts in instruction and support learning and inclusion for students with varying abilities and learning styles.

After the residency, most teachers report an increased knowledge of incorporating art strategies to enhance learning. Not only did teachers assist their students during the residency, but many teachers participated in the rehearsals and created art with the students.

Teachers reported very positive attitudes regarding the AIA program at the end of residencies. All participating teachers would recommend AIA to other schools. On average across two years, **96 percent of teachers reported enjoying collaborating with the teaching artist and would like to participate in a program like this again.** Teachers also agreed at a high rate that the residency had a positive impact in the school and a variety of other positive impacts on classroom techniques, parent/family interest, and broader integration of the arts in other subjects.

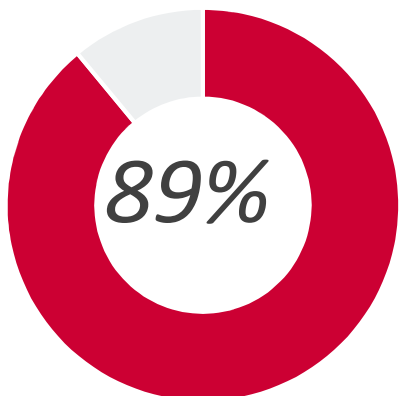


Gains in Teachers' Professional Skills Throughout the AIA Residency:

- Teaching arts subjects and/or arts concepts
- Integrating the arts with other subjects
- Using differentiated instruction methods

89% Satisfied

Nearly nine in every ten teachers were satisfied or very satisfied with the AIA residency



Teachers Report Meaningful Experiences for Themselves and Students

Overall, teachers reported that the residency was a positive experience and provided valuable impacts and experiences to their students. Giving students the opportunity to participate in new artistic and creative endeavors created a rewarding experience for many teachers. Comments reflect that many **teachers experienced a strong sense of collaboration and shared interest between themselves and their teaching artist.**

IN EDUCATORS' OWN WORDS

"I used props and/or technology that I had not previously used to engage the children. I approached the teaching with a variety of tools, with the idea that each child might be motivated by a different mode of learning." - Teaching Artist

"This residency helped me develop ways of working with students from a strengths perspective within the setting of a large classroom. It is easy to fall into labeling children when they have times of difficulty in the classroom. I found that finding those individual strengths helps the classroom run more smoothly." - Teaching Artist

Principals and Administrators Value the AIA Residency

Principals and school administrators of participating AIA residency schools universally described the program as favorable. **Every administrator who responded to the annual end-of-year survey would recommend the AIA program to other schools.** School administrators would recommend the program because it encourages student growth, allows classrooms to be flexible with the standards-based curriculum to incorporate the arts, and gives students the opportunity to express themselves in a unique way.

School administrators value the AIA residency for its benefits to students, such as giving students the opportunity to engage with something new and express themselves. Principals and administrators observed the AIA residency teaching students new outlets to deal with their emotional stress or mental issues in a unique and creative way in the classroom. Other school administrators believe the AIA program positively impacted their students' learning goals and school improvement goals:

"The Adaptation, Integration and the Arts program absolutely impacted our students' learning goals. Our staff had the ability to sit down prior to the start of class and outline goals and standards they would like to work on within the program. The teaching artist integrated the standards and learning targets within the classes."

– School Administrator

9 in 10

More than 93 percent of school administrators with AIA programs believed that the residency is impacting students and learning.

"The AIA residency provided students with a different cultural experience and self-control through dance."

– School Administrator

100% Recommend

Every administrator would recommend the AIA program to other schools



Reasons School Administrators Recommend the AIA Residency:

- Encourages student growth
- Allows classrooms to thoughtfully incorporate the arts into standards-based curriculum
- Opportunity for unique student expression

Integrated Arts Education is Beneficial to Teaching Artists

Teaching Artists Increase Their Knowledge and Skills

Teaching artists personally and professionally benefit from their partnership with AIA. Teaching artists often increase their own knowledge and skills because of the residency by acquiring new skills and learning to create a curriculum tailored to the specific needs and interests of their class. Other teaching artists credit the residency as having helped them find new ways to connect with special needs students, and thus more effectively teach the adapted curriculum.

The AIA residency experience is personally to teaching artists as well. Teaching artists watch their students' progress and value empowering children to express themselves. Teaching artists are deeply invested in their students and their success, and in general find the opportunity to work with them rewarding.

Teaching Artists' Knowledge and Skills Increased because of AIA:

- Universal Design for Learning Checklist
- Abilities to accommodate students' learning styles
- Create a curriculum tailored to the class's specific needs and interests
- Incorporate new art forms into the classroom

IN EDUCATORS' OWN WORDS

"I found my relationship with many of the students meaningful. I feel I was able to connect, and I was in-turn inspired by their creativity and open minds. Many of the students had never been introduced to the different projects or artistry I offered, so to be a part of their curiosity and discussions felt very fulfilling." - Teaching Artist

"I found the engagement and growth of the younger classes to be very meaningful. Those students were excited to be creative, with the art and writing processes complementing each other. The fourth- and fifth-grade students were so proud and eager to present their books to the class once they were completed - I was so proud and moved by their pride and their progress!" - Teaching Artist

"The residency helped me problem-solve the most effective way to successfully create this project in the space allotted. The project helped me work more effectively with a large range of abilities and attention spans." - Teaching Artist

Elements of a Successful AIA Residency

The 2016-2017 residency evaluation was designed to illuminate the qualities of a good residency that may be driving positive student outcomes. Data indicates communication, planning, and feedback between teaching artists and teachers supports a good residency. Similarly, encouraging the teachers and teachers' aides to be engaged participants in the AIA residency and to encourage the students was viewed as important to the residency's success. Formalizing these principles in teaching artist trainings may expand the number of residencies who are reporting favorable outcomes and increased student gains.

Classroom Teachers and Aides Actively Involved

The classroom teachers play an integral role in the success of the residency. Teaching artists' end-of-year evaluations highlighted the invaluable support provided by the teachers, praising the extent to which teachers participated in hands-on activities with the students and managed classroom behaviors. Not only did teachers assist their students during the residency, but many teachers participated in the rehearsals and created art with the students. Teaching artists expressed how a classroom teacher's involvement improved the class participation. At the beginning of the residency, it is important to set the expectation with classroom teachers that their participation will be required and is integral to the success of the program.

Provide Additional Support or Resources to AIA Residencies Facing Challenges

AIA residency sites with poorer teacher perceptions, teaching artist perceptions, and/or student outcomes often experienced a logistical challenge, such as poor communication channels between teachers and teaching artists, inappropriately large space to conduct the artistic lesson, turnover of teachers or teaching artists who previously partnered at that site, and large student group sizes. There may be missed opportunities for teaching artists to collaborate with teachers in a way that produced greater student outcomes. Feedback and communication checkpoints should be scheduled into AIA residencies to provide real-time guidance to teaching artists that may improve the quality of the residency and overall program impact.

Elements of a Successful AIA Residency:

- Ongoing communication
- Classroom teachers and aides actively involved
- Administrative support to Teaching Artist
- Long-term Teaching Artist relationships with the school and classroom teachers

Jada's Story

During this residency the students of Charles Mooney Elementary School explored the different ways in which we love. The students were placed into groups and worked together throughout the process in partnering, poetry creation, and image searching. One group in particular has stood out and really showcased how to collaborate with students of all abilities.

Jada, a student who is blind, has never experienced a dance or exercise class. Upon our first meeting, her teacher mentioned her enjoyment of singing, however was apprehensive to her reaction to dance. Through the showcasing of hand-over-hand techniques the teachers were asked to provide one-on-one assistance to Jada in order to guide her through the movements of class. During the floor exercise portion of our warm up, the students are asked to lay on the floor for crunches. I could see the difficulty in which Jada and her aid were having in getting her to lie back on the floor in order for her to complete the exercise on her back. I gave a suggestion of sitting behind Jada and helping guide her to the floor. The teacher took this suggestion a step further and let Jada lay on top of her as they completed the crunches together. Jada would sit up and reach for my hands and then lie back to the floor, smiling the whole time. After class the teacher mentioned that she did not believe Jada was ever asked to lie backwards except at bedtime and that she was happy to have seen Jada pushed in a new way that could help her in other aspects of unsure movement.

Throughout the residency Jada continued to work hard and her teacher and I continued to push her to try new movements and guidance techniques. At the end of the residency Jada was performing on stage with her peers without the assistance of her aide. Another student, also named Jada, worked with her and became her peer guidance for the dance. It was beautiful to see third grade students gain compassion and understanding through peer-to-peer work in the arts, giving Jada the freedom to perform on stage for the first time.



Suggestions for Future Research

Three years of research on the impact of the AIA residency program provides much evidence that integrated arts residencies, especially with the optimal conditions, can have significant impacts on students' social-emotional and academic outcomes. Challenges of community-based research, such as small sample sizes, lack of control groups, and inconsistent survey administration at the residency site, mean that questions related to the impact of the AIA residency program impact remain. For example, research did not clearly show causation between AIA program participation and gains in student academic outcomes. Conducting a randomized control trial to measure the impact of the AIA on student academic outcomes might provide greater clarity on the program's impact in this area. Research reveals promising evidence of the AIA program impact on the life skills and social-emotional skills, particularly in Specialty Schools. Exploring this relationship with a larger sample of Specialty Schools may provide more robust evidence of how this program is benefiting students with and without disabilities.

Conclusion

The AIA residency program is highly valued by teachers and administrators. Most of the children who participate in this program experience gains in their arts appreciation, knowledge, and 21st century skills, as well as their academic, cognitive, and social skills. Teachers and teaching artists also experience direct professional development benefits from this program. The experiences, outcomes, and information collected show a solid case for an arts-integrated pedagogy to improve learning and teaching in Ohio, particularly for students with disabilities and gifted students.

