



# LEARNING AND ACHIEVING THROUGH THE ARTS

A Collaborative Project of Inner-City Arts, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the Center for Research on Creativity (CRoC), and Indiana University

## [Executive Summary](#)

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# Executive Summary

The Learning and Achieving Through the Arts (LATA) Project is a partnership project between Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and Inner-City Arts (ICA). The project implemented a collective and systemic model for bringing arts integration to the core of learning in elementary schools, and comprised three interconnected strands: (1) Providing students high quality, standards-based, sequential instruction in the arts to cultivate arts skills while fostering language development; (2) Providing gateway experiences, extended professional development, and supportive coaching for non-arts classroom teachers to grow their potential as art educators; and (3) Augmenting these activities with additional experiences that encourage whole schools to embrace arts strategies and build creative learning classrooms. The LATA evaluation summarized herein was implemented in six elementary schools (a total of 3 treatment and 3 control schools) in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) from 2010-2013.

The first strand involved moderate enhancement to the 7-week arts instructional sessions already in place at ICA, by extending some of them to 14 weeks. For purposes of achieving intended outcomes, instruction was extended from the original model to include two sessions over the course of one year, augmented by sequential learning as students proceeded through grade levels made possible by the inclusion of all grade 2–6 classrooms. Students bussed to the Inner-City Arts campus, where sessions were conducted during the regular school day in state-of-the-art studio environments. Instruction in multiple art forms (for example, Visual Arts, Ceramics, Theater, Dance, Music, Animation) was provided through the delivery of multi-week arts instructional sessions centered on California Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) Content Standards. Seven- and fourteen-week, twice-weekly sessions served as an integral component of the regular school curriculum. Students attended two sessions over the course of 12 months for a total of between 35 and 70 hours of instruction.

The second strand, professional development, involved a multi-tiered training process occurring over the course of more than one year, enabling elementary teachers to develop strategies for arts integration and establish creative learning communities in their classrooms. Art instructors and educators facilitated the integration process through coaching and the sharing of information concerning research-based integration practices.

The third strand, building arts-enriched school communities, was set in motion through the arts instructional and professional development activities, and further augmented through school-wide training and family events, fostering enthusiasm for arts infusion throughout the school environment.

The goal of this evaluation was to gauge the effectiveness of the LATA model design, strategies, and curricula in order to establish the program's validity to foster effective dissemination of a productive model. Within this goal the following objectives are addressed in this report:

- **Evaluate the effectiveness of the LATA model, measuring high achievement among students, attaining high-level standards across content areas.** This includes:
  - Improving the standardized test scores of students participating in the model, in both English language arts (ELA) and math
    - We measured this by using publicly available standardized test score data.
  - Focusing in particular on raising the ELA test scores of English language learners (ELLs)

- For this, we again used public standardized test data, as well as demographic information publicly reported by the schools.
  - Providing evidence of learning within the art forms for which students received instruction
    - We created two scoring instruments to measure this: one for animation and one for drama/theater. Over the course of this study, a drama instrument was created to estimate overall learning in the art form by systematically scoring student performance on the “name-and-a-movement” warm-up exercise. This exercise was scored across four sub-scales, reaching advanced levels of development, and able to demonstrate evidence of learning within this art form. Likewise, animation learning was assessed by systematically scoring students’ still frame animation performance in their zoetrope animations.
  - Providing evidence of enhanced creativity among students participating in LATA
    - We used Amabile’s (1982) Consensual Assessment Technique (CAT) to assess the creativity of students’ drama performances before and after they participated in the program. The CAT is an external rating of the creative product most often applied by expert raters in the field. This technique was used to our knowledge for the first time to successfully evaluate creativity in drama.
- **Advance sustained school-wide improvement in classroom instruction through professional development and related activities that bring the arts to the core of all learning school-wide.** This includes:
  - Students improving in both engagement and motivation to learn
    - For this, we used a Student Sense of Community survey adapted from the Developmental Studies Center’s (2005) Child Development Project Student Questionnaire for Elementary Students.
  - Teachers improving their perception of their schools’ professional learning community
    - We used the Professional Learning Communities Assessment-Revised (PLCA-R) to evaluate this outcome.
  - Participating teachers improving their integration of the arts into their regular teaching
    - To evaluate this measure, we used selected subscales from ICA’s arts integration survey for teachers.
  - Teachers enhancing their classrooms’ creative learning communities
    - This also came from subscales in ICA’s arts integration survey.

To aid in discerning the effects of the LATA model, three LAUSD control schools not receiving services from ICA were matched with the three treatment schools that participated in LATA. In order to ensure reasonable comparability, the control schools were matched with the treatment schools on more than 30 criteria, including similar multi-ethnic makeup, similarly high proportions of ELLs, and similarly high proportions of students in the Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) program.

Results of the evaluation strongly support the efficacy of the LATA model, favoring treatment group comparisons across nearly all measures.

When compared to the control schools, treatment school CST-M (mathematics) standardized test scores rose from comparability at the beginning to a statistically significant advantage throughout all three years of the program ( $p < 0.05$ ). ***Standardized math test scores rose for treatment schools from 68% of students reaching proficiency at baseline to an average of 74.5% over the course of the three years of***

***the program (a 6.5% average gain over the baseline). During the same period, the control schools demonstrated a 3.5% average gain over the baseline. These were statistically significant differences between the treatment and control schools ( $p < 0.05$ ), favoring the treatment schools.***

Similar gains were observed in CST-ELA (English language arts) standardized test scores, except that the treatment schools started out significantly behind the control schools at baseline, but ended up significantly higher ( $p < 0.05$ ) than control counterparts throughout all three years of the program. ***Standardized ELA test scores rose for treatment schools from 50% proficiency at baseline to an average of 61% over the course of the program (an 11% average gain over the baseline). During the same period, the control schools had a decline of a 1% average loss under the baseline. These were statistically significant differences between the treatment and control schools ( $p < 0.05$ ), favoring the treatment schools.***

Moreover, treatment-school English language learners' (ELLs') CST-ELA test score results improved to an even greater extent than the whole-school populations' scores did. While also starting out with scores significantly behind those of the control schools, ELL students' scores significantly surpassed control ELL students' scores ( $p < 0.05$ ) throughout the three years of the program. ***Standardized ELA test scores rose for ELLs in treatment schools from 28% proficiency at baseline to an average of 43% proficiency over the course of the program (a 15% average gain over the baseline). During the same period, the control schools had a decline of a 1% average loss under the baseline. These were statistically significant differences between the treatment and control schools ( $p < 0.05$ ), favoring the treatment schools.***

This evidence consistently suggests that ***engaging in intensive arts instruction and high-quality arts integration through the LATA program had significantly positive effects on students' standardized test scores and overall academic achievement.***

Additionally, we examined the extent of arts learning among a sample of LATA participants. To do so, we designed a new assessment of student learning in the arts through a drama exercise both at the beginning of their LATA session (pretest), and at the end 14 weeks later (posttest). In order to see whether their proficiency in theater performance had improved, we also compared these results to those from an identical pretest and posttest administered to control classrooms. Results demonstrated that ***70% of treatment students improved their drama performance between pre and post, as compared to 46% of control students who improved on the post. This difference is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) between groups, favoring the treatment schools.***

Amabile's (1982) Consensual Assessment Technique (CAT) involves raters who are experts in a field rating the creativity of a set of products according to their own subjective definition of creativity. The CAT has never been used in the field of drama before, but our results showed that such a use is viable because it leads to the high inter-rater reliability that is a prerequisite for using the CAT. Thus we were able to glean from our expert rater's creativity scoring that ***33% of treatment students improved the creativity of their drama performances between pre and post, to an extent that approached significance (vs. 23% of control students whose creativity scores increased on the post). The creativity of treatment students' performances was also rated as significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) higher than that of the control students' creativity, even in the pre.*** This suggests that the LATA program (and perhaps the Inner-City Arts environment) had an effect on students' creativity even very early on.

The Student Sense of Community survey asked students questions about their view of their school as a community, of their classroom as a community, their liking for school, and enjoyment of class. The survey was administered at both pre and post time points to students from both the treatment and control schools. **Results of the Student Sense of Community survey indicated an increase of overall sense of community in 50% (94/188) of the treatment student group.** While not many of the treatment-control comparisons were statistically significant, **a greater percentage of treatment students increased their scores on the post in all subscales than did control students.**

We also administered two surveys to treatment school teachers at two time points (pre and post) and control school teacher survey data at the end of the evaluation study for comparison. Treatment teachers showed improvements on both of these surveys. The first survey, the Professional Learning Communities Assessment-Revised (PLCA-R), measured teachers' perceptions of their schools as professional learning communities. **Treatment teachers' scores on the PLCA-R significantly improved ( $p < 0.05$ ) between pre and post. Their scores were also significantly higher ( $p < 0.05$ ) than the control teachers' scores.**

The second survey administered to teachers, the Inner-City Arts (ICA) Arts Integration survey, measured many outcomes of interest to ICA. General findings from this survey showed that **treatment teachers improved their integration of many art forms into their teaching, participated in more professional development by the post, and improved their classrooms' creative learning communities.**

Collectively, these results demonstrate that the LATA model successfully achieved the vast majority of its objectives throughout the project and brought a great deal of positive change to the elementary schools that participated, including measurable impact on student academic achievement in mathematics and English language arts (particularly among English language learners), student creativity and learning in the arts, and improved overall professional learning communities among teachers, particularly increasing participating teacher use of stand-alone and arts-integrated instruction.

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