

Assessing the Impacts of Arts Integration and Creative Transformation in Professional Learning Communities: The Beacon Schools Study

Centers for Research on Creativity
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The Centers for Research on Creativity (CROC) conducted a three-year study on the impact of arts integration implementation in three school districts within San Diego County, California employing a process methodology developed by Collaborations: Teachers and Artists (CoTA). Whole school professional development was provided each year by CoTA to all teachers in the form of extensive 10-week projects in academic content areas in all classrooms in three selected elementary “Beacon Schools” (one per district).

CROC’s findings synthesized quantitative outcomes employing the Next Generation Creativity Assessment (NGCA) created by Principal Investigator and CROC founder, the late James Catterall. With funding from Disney (Corporate Giving), studies established the validity and reliability of the NGCS instrument which was subsequently administered annually to a cohort of students from third to fifth grade in the Beacon Schools.

Qualitative analysis gleaned from structured observations, questionnaires and interviews of teachers, artists, principals, and school district superintendents was also undertaken by CROC research associates in the field.

CROC concluded that the three-year findings are promising for students with *sustained, statistically significant growth* in **demonstrated creativity, creative self-efficacy, and empathy**. Additionally, in the final year, students experienced a *very large significant gain* in **critical thinking**. CROC suggests that the CoTA program builds upon creative skills sequentially, targeting general creativity in the early years, followed by deep critical thinking in the final year of the program, after solidifying **general creativity, collaboration, and empathy**.

The evaluation provided a rich description of the shift in school culture observed over the length of the study from the perspective of the classroom teacher, principal, and school superintendent.

Hypothesized ***Mechanisms of Change*** were extracted from the process analysis and the significance and implications of creative teaching and learning were considered as an essential necessity for student success.

The research findings have been shared with multiple school superintendents in San Diego County, with personnel from the Innovation Division of the San Diego County Office of Education, with the CEO of United Way of San Diego County and, most recently, at the Creativity Conference, an annual international forum convened by Southern Oregon University (July 11-14, 2019) where presentations are competitively selected based upon academic rigor and contribution to the field.

Academic papers are currently in preparation to disseminate the Beacon Schools Study results through publication in peer-reviewed journals.

In addition, webinars are being developed to engage influential leaders in education, business, government and the arts on the implications of the findings.

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