

FINAL USDOE REPORT: Grades 2 & 3



EDUCATIONAL ARTS TEAM, INC

www.educationalartsteam.org

Introduction

This report summarizes the partnership between the Jersey City Public Schools (JCPS) and the Educational Arts Team (EAT) that was funded by the United States Department of Education Office of Innovation Arts in Education Model Development and Dissemination program (September 2011- June 2014).

The four-year USDOE grant included

- A pilot year (September 2010 to June 2011) to develop lessons and study instruments,
- Years two and three (September 2011 to June 2013) focused on 24 randomly selected teachers and classrooms of second and third graders at six schools and
- Year four (September 2013 to June 2014) to disseminate findings and activities to all second and third grade teachers in the district.

The goals of the project were to improve teaching methods and increase academic performance for elementary school students (Grades 2 and 3) by infusing theater arts methodology into the language arts curriculum. The project also included a rigorous evaluation that documented the efficacy of the arts to improve academic performance.

This report plans to give an overview of the following:

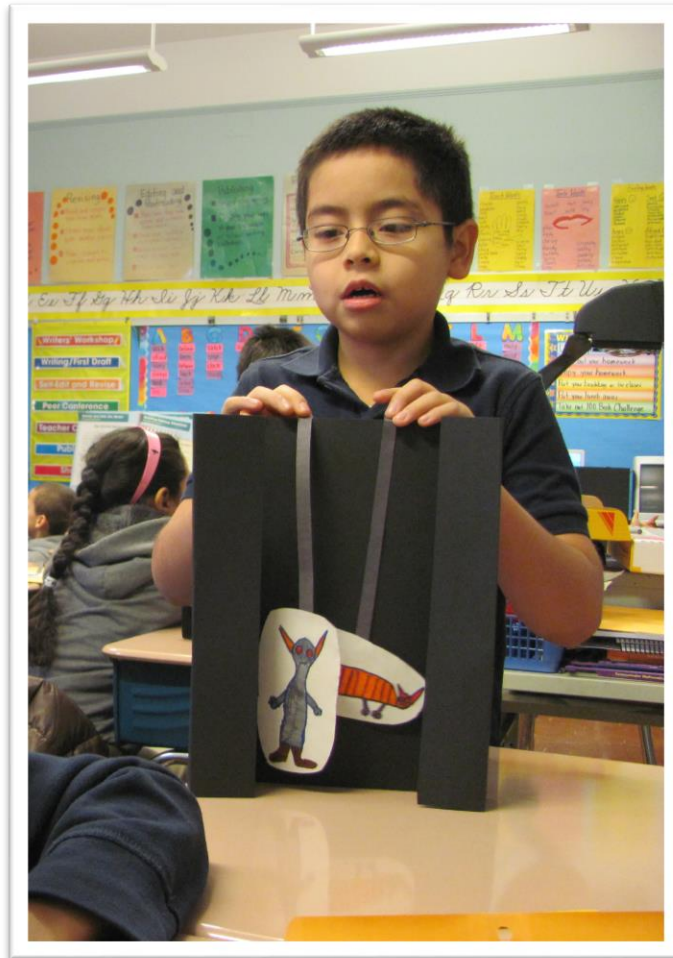
- **Student Workshops**
- **Professional Development**
- **Dissemination**
- **Findings**

Student Workshops

No child should be permitted to grow up without exercise of the imagination. It enriches life. It makes things wonderful and beautiful.

Mark Twain

The 30 forty-five minute lessons each class received invited students to enter the imaginative and creative world of theater arts and literacy. The lessons paralleled what good readers and writers do: create and inhabit imaginary worlds filled with interesting characters, inventive settings and compelling stories. Students worked in role to understand the motivation of characters, the tension of plot development, and the effect of setting on a



story, all the while accessing the space in their imaginations from where ideas spring. The relationship between theater and language arts learning created a powerful synergy that engaged students in transformative learning experiences.

Developing students who are creative thinkers able to infer, synthesize and evaluate is a challenging and crucial task. In one lesson of this project, students worked in role as alumni of a science camp. Their mission was to convince a reluctant young girl to work past her fears of being away from

home for the first time. In another lesson students met Charlie, a gadget-obsessed youngster, and his concerned mother.

In both workshops students had the opportunity to question characters (played by the teacher in role), in one story as alumni, in the other as curious readers. They needed to interpret and draw conclusions about what they learned; deal with complex social problems; and resolve conflicting views by supporting arguments with evidence from the reading and the drama.

In another lesson, *Pop Up Puppet Theater*, students heard and retold a fable, created a script from imagined dialogue between characters, described and drew setting for their stories, and performed one-on-one puppet shows for younger students.



Pilot Year

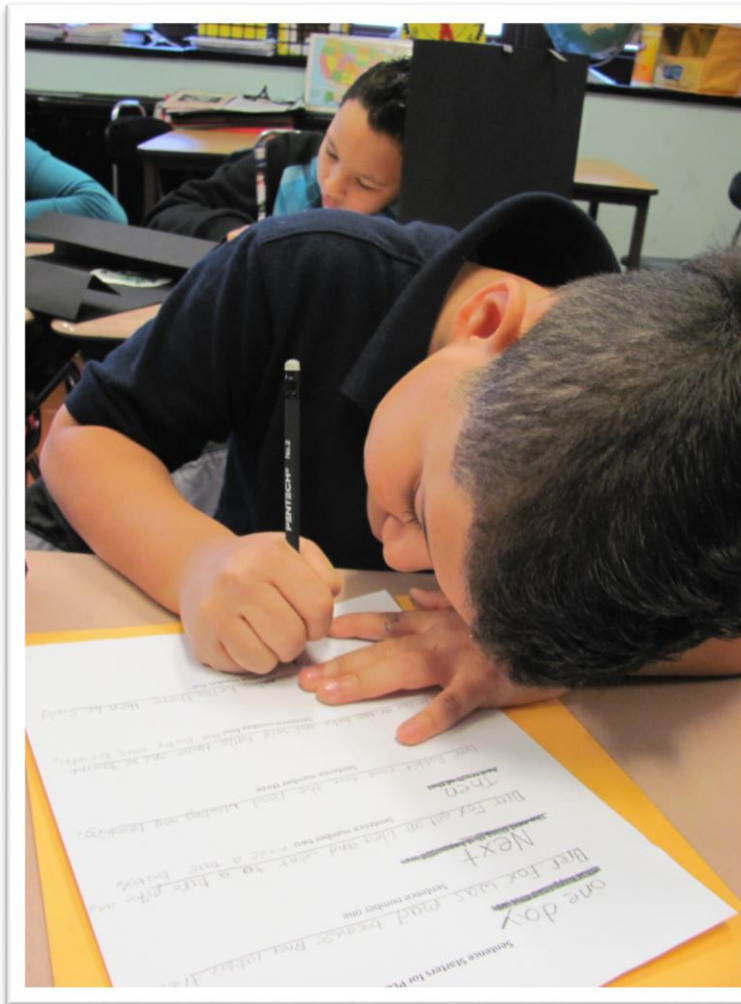
EAT piloted 30 drama and language arts lessons in twelve 2nd and 3rd grade classes at three JCPS (PS 8, PS 17, and PS 24) schools. 245 2nd and 3rd graders participated in a total of 360 lessons.

Years Two and Three

A total of 12 JCPS schools participated. Of these 12 schools, six (PS 3, 12, 22, 25, 28, and 34) were randomly selected for the intervention (treatment group). Then 24 second and third grade classrooms were randomly selected from these schools and received classroom workshops.

Another 24 randomly selected second and third grade classrooms from six schools (PS 6, 11, 23, 30, 20 and 29) acted as a control group.

In total, 720 lessons were organized around various arts integration techniques: such as role drama and Pop-up Puppet Theater. In these students explored stories such as *Dear Juno*, *Carl the Complainer* and *Froggy Fable* in the second grade; and *Charlie McButton*, *Happy Birthday*



Mr. Kang and Fly Eagle Fly in the third grade.

In year two, a total of 462 2nd and 3rd graders participated; during year three a total of 501.

Year Four

In the fourth year of the project, EAT disseminated its findings and successful strategies to all 2nd and 3rd grades teachers in the Jersey City Public School district through a series of workshops and professional development sessions.

Professional Development

During the four-year project EAT shared strategies and applied lessons with the goal of inspiring teachers to approach their teaching of reading and writing creatively and effectively. Teachers experienced the strategies and developed lesson plans.

Years Two and Three

During years two and three 24 teachers received 24 hours of Professional Development (12 hours each year). Teachers commented on how much they enjoyed learning from each other, acquiring new strategies, and seeing concrete examples of how to integrate arts into the classroom.

I believe the educational value of this program is priceless. Students need to experience literature and not just read it. **Katie O'Toole, Grade 2 Teacher, PS 8**



Teaching and learning is serious stuff. However, there is no reason why it shouldn't be fun and engage all learners regardless of language, intellectual capacities, or disabilities. **Kathy Ballas, Grade 2 Teacher, PS 5**

I can't wait to try this in my classroom. I can already predict an improvement in their descriptive writing and reading comprehension. **Melissa Portento, Grade 3 Teacher, PS 11**

Teacher Feedback

Teachers responded positively to the engagement of the students in the process. Teachers' responses to dissemination of demonstration lessons were very positive:

Students were fully participating, laughing and having fun, listening and retelling, and excited to share their own ideas about new details that they could add to their stories.

*When it was time to write students were excited to put pen to paper. **2nd Grade Teacher, PS 23***

*I noticed that my students were able to recall the stories told the prior week. I also noticed during the 1st week when they were asked to write after hearing the stories, my students were able to sit quietly and write while adding details. One student, who doesn't like to write was excited about what he was doing. He wrote a half of page, and although he struggled academically, he was able to read it to me and he was so proud. - **2nd Grade Teacher, PS 29***



This is a wonderful program, developing comprehension, sequencing, and oral speaking. The interactive play and engagement allowed students to express themselves freely with peers.

- 3rd Grade Teacher, PS 33

The students love the arts integration in the class. They remain engaged, focused and they all participate. The model lessons provide great

professional development for teachers. Many of the strategies can be implemented during daily instruction.

- 3rd Grade Teacher, PS 30

For all teacher reviews, please go to www.educationalartsteam.org

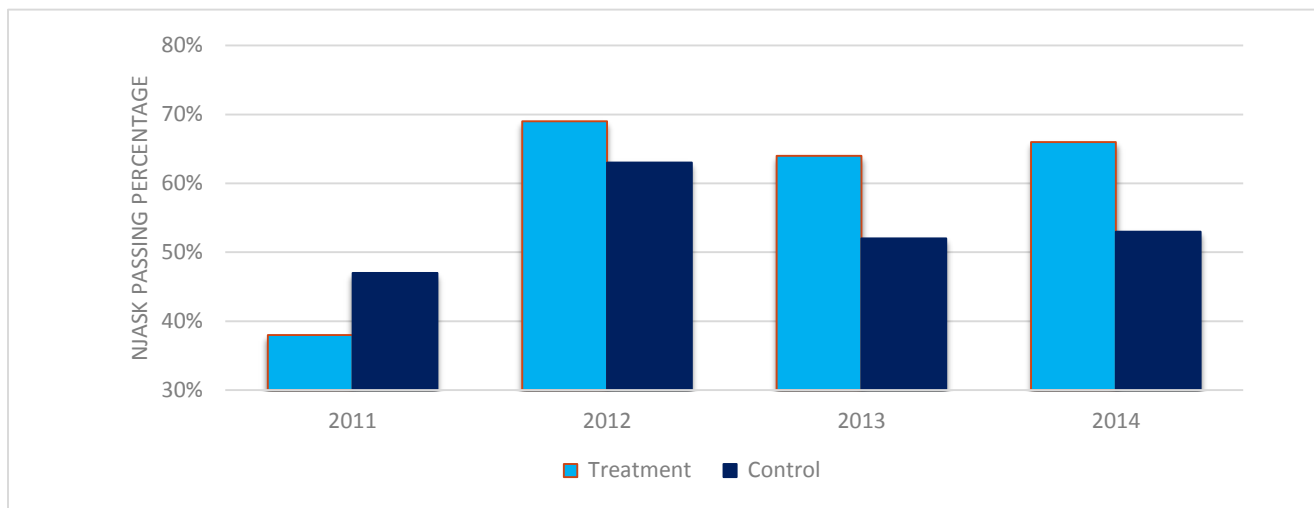
Teacher Attitudes towards the Arts

Year 2 of Grant May 2012	Favorable
Treatment teachers	62.5%
Control teachers	28.5%
Year 3 of Grant May 2013	
Treatment teachers	77.7%
Control teachers	57.1%
Year 4 of Grant May 2014	
Treatment teachers	91.3%
Control teachers	80%

Findings

New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge Scores (NJASK) for Third Grade Students

NJASK Language Arts Passing Rates



Pilot Year of Grant May 2011*	Language Arts	Mathematics
Students in the treatment schools (N=454)	38.4%	54.8%
Students in the control schools (N=521)	46.6%	62.4%

Year 2 of Grant May 2012**	Language Arts	Mathematics
Treatment students (N=227)	69%	80.6%
Control students (N=211)	63%	71.1%

Year 3 of Grant May 2013**	Language Arts	Mathematics
Treatment students (N=256)	64.1%	70.8%
Control students (N=240)	51.7%	70.9%

Year 4 of Grant May 2014**	Language Arts	Mathematics
Treatment students (N= 215)	66%	74%
Control students (N=182)	53%	64%

Scores in the Pilot Year were prior to intervention and showed control schools outperforming their treatment counterparts.

Theater Arts Standards Progress

Five domains that intersected Theater and Language Arts were studied:

- Scenery Design and Setting
- Acting and Understanding Character
- Directing and Understanding Theme, Plot, & Character Relationships
- Scriptwriting and Dialogue
- Constructing Meaning from Text

Year Two

Domain	% Student Proficiency Pre-Test	% Student Proficiency Post-Test
Scriptwriting	25%	51.4%
Acting	26.6%	57.8%
Designing	36.1%	37.5%
Directing	19.4%	33.3%
Analyzing	19.4%	37.5%

Year Three

Domain	% Student Proficiency Pre-Test	% Student Proficiency Post-Test
Scriptwriting	61.9%	73.7%
Acting	64.9%	77.2%
Designing	49.1%	89.5%
Directing	54.3%	73.7%
Analyzing	61.9%	73.7%



Special Thanks

This successful project would not have been possible without the following people and organizations:

Dr. Marcia Lyles, Superintendent, Jersey City Board of Education

Mr. Aldo Sanchez-Abreu, Associate Superintendent, Jersey City Board of Education

Mr. Jason Bing, Chief Academic Officer, Jersey City Board of Education

David Radulich, Performing Arts Supervisor, Jersey City Board of Education

Dr. Elaine Walker, Professor, Seton Hall University

Rafael Inoa, Research Doctorate, Seton Hall University

Dr. Gustave Weltsek, Professor, Indiana University

Jersey City Principals, Teachers, and Administrators

United States Department of Education

EDUCATIONAL ARTS TEAM, INC

300 MORRIS PESIN DRIVE

JERSEY CITY, NJ 07305

201.432.1912

www.educationalartsteam.org