



Constructing Youth Engagement: A synthesis of literature, observation, and professional opinion

Sponsored by Kansas City Young Audiences, Inc.



YOUTH POLICY RESEARCH GROUP INC



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About Kansas City Young Audiences

Kansas City Young Audiences (KCYA) is the largest arts education provider in the region and one of Kansas City's largest arts organizations, providing over 700 performances and 1,800 workshops annually to more than 165,000 youth participants. Kansas City Young Audiences works to improve education and build social infrastructure through the arts. This is accomplished using programs that are designed through continuous research and evaluation. The success of our programs is achieved through a series of collaborations with schools, early childhood educators, day care providers, youth development agencies, and post-secondary schools of education. Young Audiences believes that participation in the arts allows young people to better express themselves, develop higher-order thinking skills, enhance their creativity and strengthen their problem-solving ability. Young Audiences' programs are designed to promote self-esteem and life-long learning.

Overview of Project and Guiding Questions

The work of Kansas City Young Audiences is to further the understanding of art and culture (Brownlee, personal communication). The research sponsored by KCYA is intended to improve upon the practices of teaching artists and others that provide opportunities for youth to experience and create art. Stimulated by research in *Beyond the Soundbite: Arts Education and Academic Outcomes* (Winner, E. and Hetland, L., 2000) and *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning* (Fiske, T., 2001) this study has focused on deepening understanding of youth engagement as it relates to the processes, techniques and products associated with the arts and arts integration in the classroom.

In the late 1990's KCYA began sponsoring research and evaluation studies focused on studying the instructional practices and behaviors of artists and teachers in school classrooms as youth were engaged in arts activities (Moore, W. P., Anthony, J., and Husman, M., 2001; Moore, 2001; Moore, 2000a; Moore, 2000b; Moore, 1998). Those foundational studies have been synthesized by KCYA staff in the form of a theory of change describing the instructional conditions and youth outcomes anticipated in an arts-rich instructional environment (see Figure in Appendix entitled Outcomes Model for Students and Educators in the Artist-Teacher Residency Program). KCYA staff identified teaching practices thought to be key facilitators of student engagement during instruction. The Outcomes Model served as an organizer for the current study and also as a focus for researchers to begin validating the theory as articulated. KCYA staff framed this study as a first step toward validating a descriptive framework or context for the study of the arts- rich classroom. KCYA staff believed it was essential and foundational to further work to answer these key questions in the study:

- What is student engagement?
- What are the observable indicators of student engagement?
- What instructional practices of teaching artists appear to facilitate student engagement?
- How and why does the integration of the arts engage students in a learning experience?

- What is happening in the arts experience that promotes a higher level of engagement from a student?

This project is the beginning of a larger inquiry process focused on identifying and describing the ways and the means by which the arts engage students in the academic learning process. In particular, this work brings clarity to the classroom behavior of youth when they are involved in learning activities. We began our study with the perspective of Newmann (1986), who noted that “engagement is difficult to define operationally, but we know it when we see it, and we know it when it is missing” (p. 242).

While there are relatively few studies that specifically describe and define youth engagement, there are more general studies of motivation and psychological states and external conditions that seem to be associated with engagement or that facilitate engagement. However, most theorists today argue that engagement is distinct from motivation.

Concurrently, in general, rigorous controlled studies of research in the field of arts and arts integration is historically absent. Much of what artists and teaching artists do is intuitive and as a result the field has not created an overall scheme or framework that explicitly states or describes much of the cognitive and meta-cognitive processes at work in creating and responding to art. In addition, art by many has been marginalized in the school environment or seen as an add-on to the daily learning of school children. However, research has been done in the area of engagement in science learning and in the learning theory of multiple intelligences. Both of these areas have direct implications for this study and were utilized to help define and clarify our approach to describing and understanding the process and state of engagement.

About the Evaluator

Youth Policy Research Group, Inc., (YPRG) is a Kansas City-based national consulting firm that provides research and evaluation support, and technical assistance to organizations engaged in educational systemic reform, organizational assessment, policy analysis and development, youth development, and community partnerships. Dr. William Moore, Dr. Phyllis Clay, and Dr. Terri Akey are the three senior partners leading YPRG. YPRG partners have expertise in the areas of research and evaluation design; advanced statistical analysis; design of assessment systems; testing and measurement; survey development; observation studies; program evaluation; early childhood, elementary, secondary and adult curriculum and instruction; and technology applications for information management and reporting. Each partner holds a doctorate in educational psychology or evaluation. Dr.’s Akey and Moore earned doctorates from the University of Kansas and Dr. Clay earned her doctorate from The Ohio State University.

YPRG partners have led large-scale, multi-site evaluations, and have participated in both national and regional evaluations of youth development initiatives, education reform, prevention, and intervention programs for higher-risk youth, as well as in the creation of assessments for state and local systems. YPRG partners have more than 30 years of combined experience inside of school systems as research, evaluation and assessment directors and as program evaluators; within higher education as professors of measurement, assessment, and evaluation; and as independent consultants working with private and community foundations, research and

evaluation firms, community organizations, youth-serving agencies, schools, and health care institutions.

Procedures

The study had four phases of activity:

- Review of literature regarding engagement to identify potential definitions and features.
- Videotaping of teaching artists in five different disciplines conducting workshops in schools.
- Interviews with teaching artists and sample of students immediately following the workshops.
- Observation: professional panel review of videotaped lessons.

Review of the literature

KCYA staff and the evaluator conducted several literature searches through ERIC and on the broader World Wide Web. In addition, the evaluator reviewed a published compendium of research studies of the relationship between learning in the arts and broader academic development (Deasy, 2002). The intent of the literature review was to determine what definitions, if any, existed for youth engagement and what, if any, features and characteristics were identified for engagement. A summary of this review can be found in the Results section of the report.

Videotaping artists at work

In order to more closely study artist, teacher and student activity during classroom-based arts instruction, KCYA staff hired a professional videographer to tape a sample of workshops conducted by KCYA-sponsored artists in schools. While there are some drawbacks to videotaping, (e.g., not being able to record all activity in the room at the same time, audio is not always very clear, and unintentional influences upon the behavior of subjects of videotaping), the videotape of classroom behavior is one of our best tools for recording behavior to later be analyzed in more detail. The evaluator and KCYA staff selected a purposive and proportional sample of workshops to be videotaped. The sample needed to reflect the five disciplines represented in the KCYA roster of artists and should be proportional to the number of workshops conducted annually. The final sample is reflected in the table below:

Table One
Sample of Workshops for Observation Study

Discipline	# of workshops offered on roster	% workshop offerings	# of workshops observed
Creative Writing	5	6.7%	1
Dance	8	10.7%	1
Music	11	14.8%	2

Theater	11	14.8%	2
Visual Art	40	53.00%	5
<i>Total</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>100.00%</i>	<i>11</i>

Note: Based on 2001 –2002 school year.

A secondary purpose for the videotapes is their use as tools to debrief with teaching artists, to review and reflect on practices. Specifically, KCYA staff can show teaching artists where there are strengths and weaknesses to their instructional practices. Staff can use the videotapes to help develop stronger teaching artists by sharing exemplary models of best practices with newer or weaker teaching artists. The videotape also provides baseline data that staff can use to monitor the progression and development of teaching artists.

Interview of Teaching Artists and Participating Students

Immediately following the videotaped workshop, interviews were held with the teaching artist and with randomly selected students. The interview information was collected to support the viewing of videotapes. Questions posed focused on the following aspects of the workshop:

- How did you make this workshop personally meaningful to students (e.g., did you connect the learning to their culture(s), their prior learning, their interests, their gender, their ethnicity, their neighborhood)? Please explain how you did this.
- Did you make students aware of a goal for their participation in the workshop? When did student learning become goal directed in the workshop?
- Please describe how you actively engaged students with your art form during the workshop?
- What choices were students offered, as they were involved in the workshop? Did students have aesthetic as well as end-product choices?
- Did students have opportunities to both learn and to apply what they learned? Did they get to observe you performing your art form as well as hearing you describe the art form? Please describe how you did this.
- What else do you want us to know about your strategies to engage youth in your art form?

Participating students were randomly selected by the teacher and met immediately after the workshop with the interviewer. Questions asked of students were:

- Compared to other things you have learned this year in school, how interesting was this workshop?
- Please tell me what was most interesting to you about this workshop?
- What part of the workshop was most fun for you?
- Compared to other things you have learned this year in school, how much fun was this workshop?
- Did the artist give you chances to make decisions about how to make your artwork? What decisions did you make?
- Did you get to make something today? Would you like to do it again?

Using Videotapes to Identify Youth Engagement

The principal intent of the study was creating a conceptual and operational definition of youth engagement. Using videotapes, and panelists of professional artists and educators, their task was to identify instances of engagement and identify the key features of engagement. Secondly, panelists were asked to identify the characteristics of the instructional environment that seem to support and encourage youth engagement.

Process for Documenting Engagement in Videotaped Workshops

The evaluator created an open-ended data collection form (see Appendix) and provided our panelists with clarifying guidelines on which to view videotape. We did provide our working definition of engagement and asked panelists to try to apply that definition to the behaviors observed on videotape and to operationalize this definition. To the extent that they found themselves needing to refine or reconceptualize the working definition they were encouraged to do so with their colleague panelists in post-observation debriefings. Panelists were presented with videotape segments of workshops and were asked to identify exemplars of youth engagement, the context and behaviors leading up to engagement; and the context and behaviors following the conclusion of the exemplar of youth engagement. Our goal was not to obtain reliable data from the process. Instead we were interested in having our panelists serve as a focus group, viewing videotape, discussing what they are seeing, documenting what they see on videotape, and collectively refining our working definition and features of youth engagement. Our current definition of youth engagement has emerged from the panel's intensive review of videotaped arts-based lessons implemented in elementary, middle and high school classrooms.

The Panelists

The panel consisted of five members, two classroom teachers and three artists. All members of the panel are individuals who have many years of experience working with KCYA staff and have demonstrated highly reflective instructional practice throughout their work with KCYA. Panelists included four females and one male. All panelists were white. The task of the panel was to use the videotape and the interview information as a catalyst for further clarification and discussion of engagement through artistic experience.

Listening to and working from what the panel identified as exemplars of engagement served as the foundation for further development and refinement of the working definition. Panelists viewed approximately 11 hours of videotape of teaching artists working in classrooms in suburban and urban school districts. Teaching artists working in five different disciplines. Panelists were asked to view videotape, capture information from the tapes, note the relevant information on data collection forms, and then to debrief with the evaluator, KCYA staff, and their colleagues on the panel. This process occurred across three days in July, 2002.

Analysis

Data for this study consist of the following:

1. A summary of literature on engagement;
2. A summary of interviews with teaching artists and a sample of youth who participated in a workshop with the artist;
3. Panelists' notes on exemplars of engagement and the conditions supporting engagement of youth from videotapes of teaching artists conducting workshops with youth.

The literature will be synthesized and existing definitions identified that will contribute to our effort to define and describe youth engagement. Interviews with teaching artists and youth will be used to assist the evaluator in extracting intent and purpose from videotaped workshops. Panelists notes will be used to form the foundation for our synthesis of information---we will begin with our working definition, examine the literature to support and refine our definition, go to panelists notes to further refine and support the definition; and locate exemplars, conditions, and context for further defining and characterizing youth engagement. Consequently, this analysis is solely qualitative in nature, no meaningful statistics can be used, and the final product is a definition with supporting evidence, exemplars, and descriptions of what the instructional environment must look like for engagement to emerge and be encouraged.

Results

The evaluator and KCYA staff proposed the following working definition for engagement. This definition served to guide the work of the professionals on the panel and was a starting point for the panelists as they sought to identify key features of engagement, refine the definition, and describe exemplars of facilitating instructional practices:

KCYA WORKING DEFINITION OF ENGAGEMENT

An engaged learner is one who has a personal investment in the work, is interested and finds personal meaning in the work, is an active participant in the work, and sees the work as an opportunity to learn more and create new knowledge.

Defining Engagement: What the Literature Suggests

Why is engagement an important construct? Because we theorize that being engaged is an indication of active involvement in learning and we believe that being deeply involved in one's own learning is a key factor in learning well. We assume that the greater the level of engagement the greater the potential there is for learning. Educators around the globe are struggling with this term of engagement. What does it mean, what does it look like when youth are engaged, and how adults can create learning environments and activities that maximize the opportunity for youth to

be engaged? Unfortunately, the basis for answering these questions is not clear and in the absence of clarity the field has spawned a variety of definitions---most vague and un-measurable.

Artists generally believe the arts provide a powerful vehicle for learning in other domains and that participating in the arts is an engaging form of learning. We also recognize that if the arts can engage youth that are typically disengaged in other forms of school-based learning, then the arts can be a mechanism to retrieve youth from the fringes of academic failure. Many questions surround this area of inquiry: What makes the arts engaging? When youth are engaged in the arts what does that look like? How do we know when youth are engaged in the arts? What does the literature say about the relationship between the arts and engagement? This portion of the study synthesizes the prominent literature on engagement.

A recent compendium of research studies examining learning in the arts and student academic and social development (Deasy, 2002) indicates that indeed there are relationships between learning in the arts and academic and social development. Several studies conclude that children are more engaged when involved in artistic activities in school than when involved in other curricular activities. Deeper engagement is observed when youth integrate the arts and academic learning. Individual studies involving at-risk youth often account for their success as a consequence of increased enthusiasm for school because of a new found involvement with the arts. "Claims of transfer in the form of higher engagement include observations that children in schools with high levels of arts experiences are generally more engaged and motivated in school. This can be seen as the transfer of attitudes or orientations about school from learning in and with the arts to learning situations more generally" (Catterall, p. 155, in Deasy, 2002).

Smith, et al (2001) synthesized the literature regarding engagement and suggests several definitions:

Engagement is more than motivation or the general desire to succeed in school. It involves participation, connection, attachment, and integration in particular settings and tasks (Newmann, 1989, p. 34).

Engagement is psychological investment in learning, . . . mastering knowledge, skills and crafts, not simply a commitment to complete assigned tasks or to acquire symbols of high performance such as grades or social approval (Newmann, Wehlage & Lamborn, 1992, p. 12).

Engagement is a dialogue, where the student interacts with more than themselves [sic]. In order to be fully engaged, a student must be emotionally involved in an inner and outer dialogue with oneself, with the teacher and with the learning environment (Kozolanka, 1993, pp. 6-7).

Engaged students are attracted to their work; persist in their work despite challenges and obstacles; take visible delight in accomplishing their work (Schlechy, cited in Strong, Silver & Robinson, 1995, p. 8).

Smith, et al. notes that “connecting at various levels appears to be an integral component of student engagement. Connecting with the self is clearly an essential beginning. In interviews with young people Smith found that youth recognized that they needed to connect to others but doing so requires that youth have an audible voice, one that they believe is worthy of contribution. Feeling that they are valued in their own right needs to be both internalized and externalized” (p. 13). Many theorists argue that engagement is about relationships, dialogue, connection, communication with self and with others---peers, teacher, community (Kozolanka, 1993; Newmann, 1989; Smith et.al, 2001). Another commonality across the several definitions offered in the literature seems to be the notion that youth become invested in their work----it is not simply a task to do well, it is something that they are truly interested in, value, and desire to be involved with---they are “attracted to their work” (Schlecty, p. 8.).

Strong, Silver and Robinson argue that engaged students are driven by four essential goals, each of which satisfies a particular human need: success (the need for mastery); curiosity (the need for understanding); originality (the need for self-expression); and relationships (the need for involvement with others) . . . (1995, p. 8).

So, the literature suggests that engagement is:

- a psychological investment in learning that is beyond motivation;
- being an active participant in the work;
- being attracted to the work;
- being connected to, and in dialogue with ones self, teachers, peers and community about the work.

Engaged students persist in the face of difficulties, and pursue opportunities to further their understanding of the work. They are visibly pleased with their accomplishments and their motives transcend grades and social approval.

Engaged youth are “focused on their own learning, have a recognized stake in it and take part in establishing what he or she wants to learn” (Smith, et al, 2001, p. 13). Clearly, engagement seems to have cognitive and affective dimensions (Smith, p. 13) with success, curiosity, originality as key motives but the core of engagement rests on interactions with others in the community—peers, teachers, other adults—building and using relationships to sustain and foster engagement around work. These features of engagement overlap those of the KCYA working definition quite well.

PROPOSED DEFINITION OF ENGAGEMENT BASED ON LITERATURE REVIEW

Engagement is the psychological state of personal investment, interest, and attraction to some meaningful type of work. The learner is focused on their learning and deeply connected to the learning. Engaged learners are active participants in, and constructors of, their learning. They have relationships with

their peers, teachers and the community in ways that support their investment in their work. Engaged learners seek opportunities to learn more and gain deeper understandings of their learning. They persist in the face of difficulties and are pleased with their successes. Social approval or grades do not primarily motivate engaged learners.

What did Educators and Artists See in Videotaped Workshops?

Based on their review of hours of videotaped workshops, the panelists proposed the following definitions after reviewing their notes, discussing their personal working definitions, sharing their personal experiences in classrooms, and conducting a synthesis of their notes from videotapes:

PROPOSED DEFINITION OF ENGAGEMENT BASED ON VIDEOTAPED EVIDENCE DOCUMENTED BY EDUCATORS AND TEACHING ARTISTS

Learners are personally invested in an activity regardless of the end product. Learners are willing to take risks and to step outside their comfort zone. Learners want to learn more, to “master” an art form without regard for performance/evaluation. Learners internalize, personalize and express a specific experience. Working with the structure or prompts given to them by the teacher or artist, the learners exhibit a willingness to take risks and share their work with others.

Based on the observations of a panel of educators and artists, the most salient observable indicators that learners are engaged are:

- Appropriate Laughter and facial expressions—smiling, eyes open wide,
- Volunteering to participate
- Appearing anxious to participate---enthusiastic
- Rapid response to instructions/directions
- Body language—learning forward, following the movement of the artist in space
- Eye Contact—with artist and each other
- Students sharing ideas and thoughts with others
- Students not easily distracted by external stimuli
- Anticipating the next steps or activities in a lesson

Group engagement is a state that involves group cooperation and cohesion. As a group, students remain on task and are willing to share what they have seen, heard and done with each other and the teaching artist in a positive and supportive manner.

Additional Indicators of Engagement as Observed in Videotaped Workshops

Panelists noted that the following were indicators of engagement during the workshop. The indicators noted above are a synthesis of the following list. The reader may note some overlap between indicators and between the categories of indicators noted above.

Verbal Indicators

- Use of humor by youth
- Singing
- Students asked relevant questions, carried on relevant dialog about task
- Students sharing ideas
- Groups debating and trying to get their point of view understood by the other students
- Sharing completed work with classmates/ talking to classmates about what they are doing
- Students did not shame each other but encouraged one another
- Supportive responses between youth

Physical Indicators

- Open body language (facing the activity, arms relaxed, body directed toward activity)
- Hand movements, clapping, applause
- Expressing/displaying emotions and feelings
- Voice modulation in either tone or volume
- Actively writing and taking notes
- Posture shifts, leaning into hear and see, arms on table
- Eye contact, focused on activity or presenter
- Paying attention to what was going on in the classroom
- Nodding head and agreement sounds
- Answered artist with body movement and were not prompted further
- Appropriate laughter and smiling
- Students having eye contact with each other and with presenter
- Dramatic, animated, facial expressions

Decision-Making Indicators

- Do not lose focus and stayed on task—continued working
- Students making choices and decisions
- Responding to teacher prompts
- Volunteering to do something
- Pre-read assignment (preparing and practicing for activity)
- Incorporated corrections made by artist
- Following the lead of the artist
- Willingness to experiment with the art form
- Made attempts to participate
- Quick transitions and quick responses

- Worked and moved right along with the artist
- Ignoring extraneous stimuli

What Facilitates and Supports Youth Engagement?

This section of the report focuses on the question of what are effective strategies during instruction that facilitate and support the engagement of youth. Again, we turn to three sources: what the literature says, what videotaped lessons appear to suggest, and what teaching artists report following instruction.

Indications from the Literature

Smith's work in schools indicates that the following are key instructional strategies to facilitate an environment conducive to engagement:

- Opportunities to collaborate and work together
- Active, experiential instructional approaches that create space in the curriculum for student's lives and concerns
- Implementation of democratic principles of self-determination, inclusiveness, equal participation, and deliberation—which requires making clear, visible and open the lines of authority, power and decision-making processes.
- Expansive and strong relationships between the school and the community and the home.

Smith builds the case that how the curriculum is implemented is key to student engagement. A curriculum that is presented as a fixed body of knowledge that is to be disseminated to youth is not an effective strategy to engage youth. Alternately, a curriculum that is experienced and that is critically examined by youth is engaging. He notes that:

- “Hands-on activities, small group work centering serious thought and discussion about ideas and practices grounded in approaches that connected students' lives and the curriculum” (p. 7).
- Connecting the student's previous experiences and interests to the curriculum. Smith describes this as ‘curriculum as experience’

Other sources (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2001) indicate that the level of academic challenge, a supportive campus environment, positive interactions with faculty, an enriching educational experience, and active and collaborative learning are the key dimensions of student engagement. There is further support for these dimensions (see Connell, 2000) in the educational reform literature where researchers suggest that the following dimensions are critical to engaged learning:

- Low adult-student ratios

- Continuity of care across the school day and across school years (extended opportunity to learn from the same adults and to build relationships with a core set of adults)
- Enriching and diverse opportunities to learn, perform and be recognized
- High, clear and fair academic and behavioral standards

Observations of Panelists

Panelists synthesized their observations of videotapes and their professional experience and developed the following statement regarding the instructional environment and what features it must have in order to encourage and facilitate youth engagement: The environment that a teaching artist creates consists of a focused and well-planned lesson. Control is gradually lessened and decision-making power is gradually increased and given over to students as the lesson progresses and develops in a non-threatening manner. The instructional strategies that a teaching artist needs to employ are demonstration and modeling of artistic process and techniques, a modulated speaking voice, enthusiasm for the subject matter and clear opportunities for the students to connect the activity to their own personal experience, to their classmates experiences and to whatever prior knowledge they possess about the subject matter. The teaching artist builds and maintains momentum and enthusiasm through a sequence of alternating discussions and activities.

The following are instructional practices that panelists believe facilitate learner engagement:

- Instructor respect for the current state of learning of the student and their comfort level with trying new skills in front of peers
- Creating an opportunity for all youth to be involved early in the lesson
- Allowing students the opportunity to volunteer
- Using "wait" time strategically and effectively
- Redirecting student focus when needed or appropriate
- Giving structure to a task where students are allowed to make more choices as the task or lesson progresses (i.e., an expanding structure)
- Preparing students before the workshop
- Helping to establish a safe environment
- Carrying activity forward after the workshop
- Making activity relevant to students
- Modeling behavior as a fellow learner
- Clear and concise instructions, descriptions
- Using unconventional methods - words and unfamiliar routine
- Positive reinforcement
- Allowing students to make mistakes
- Instructor being sincere, supportive and encouraging
- Requesting attention - inviting participation
- Open-ended questions – what did you see, hear, or feel?
- Creating experience of art instead of learning about it—active experience
- Participation/engagement early in lesson
- Teaching Artist demonstrates a willingness to take risk and models this behavior

Key themes that seem to emerge from these comments are:

1. Respect for individual learner
2. Involving all youth early in the lesson, requesting and inviting participation
3. Using instructional tactics that facilitate involvement: wait time, redirection, preparation before lesson, modeling behavior and skills, giving clear and concise instructions, using positive reinforcement, using open-ended questions.
4. Creating an emotionally safe learning environment
5. Instructor being sincere, honest, supportive and encouraging
6. Creating learning experiences that allow youth to make choices and decisions; to make mistakes
7. Extending a lesson after the workshop—providing an extended opportunity to learn and apply

Panelists further observed that instruction that effectively engages youth in the lesson comes from a well-developed, organized instructional plan that incorporates smooth, quick transitions between activities yet allows time for reflection. Artists need to create a safe, non-threatening environment where students can take risks without being judged. Artists should incorporate different ways of evaluating student work, including student self-assessment. Artists should empower students to make choices. The panelists reported that teacher participation would enhance learner engagement while the artist is working in the classroom.

Interviews with Teaching Artists: Perspectives Following Instruction

Ten artists were videotaped providing instruction to youth in school classrooms. Following the lesson an observer interviewed the teaching artist. The summary of responses for each artist is included in a table in the appendix. The questions relevant to the question of what instructional practices facilitate engagement were:

- Q3. Please describe how you actively engaged students with your art form during the workshop?
 Q6. What else do you want us to know about your strategies to engage youth in your art form?

A sample of responses about how teaching artists engage youth during instruction are:

“Made them participate, had them draw along with me.”

“Complete full body participation.”

“Reminded them of the related activities they have done in the past and asked questions about previous knowledge.”

“They sculpted the way they wanted. I assisted when they ask for it. Remind them of all of their options.”

“All hands-on; use different spaces; do games in a circle and other groupings.”

“Let them participate by playing instruments and sing.”

“Demonstration; show and tell; get them interested in the subject, then allowing them to play with the medium, then have them follow me step by step; Repeat often . . .”

“I get involved, assisting them, offering alternatives and encouraging them to make choices.”

“ . . . I always ask a lot of questions to see if they are retaining the information . . . I show examples and ask for their observations.”

Other comments made by teaching artists following their lesson included:

“Show them enough to peak their interest.”

“My strategy is acknowledging and appreciating the unique way that each child expresses himself and I think that is engaging.”

“ I love and care about the kids; I’m here doing what I love to do.”

“Ask kids what they know to generate and apply previous knowledge . . .”

“I am very respectful of them [students] as individuals and spend as much time with each one—encouraging and giving direction . . .”

Key themes that run through these comments are:

1. Active participation using the body and mind
2. Connectedness to prior learning
3. Connectedness to personal interests
4. Observing artist model/demonstrate skills and processes
5. Providing opportunities for the learner to make decisions and choices
6. Being respectful of individuals and appreciating their uniqueness
7. Providing one-on-one instruction/support

Summary of Findings

Through a process of review, observation and conversation with practicing educators and artists, this study has focused on deepening understanding of youth engagement as it relates to the processes, techniques and products associated with the arts and arts integration in the classroom. After beginning with staff identified teaching practices thought to be key facilitators of youth engagement and an incomplete definition of engagement, KCYA leadership believed it was foundational to their future work to answer these key questions:

- What is student engagement?
- What are the observable indicators of student engagement?
- What instructional practices of teaching artists appear to facilitate student engagement?
- How and why does the integration of the arts engage students in a learning experience?
- What is happening in the arts experience that promotes a higher level of engagement from a student?

The results of this study provide a first effort at answering these questions.

1. What is student engagement?

Engagement is the psychological state of personal investment, interest, and attraction to some meaningful type of work. The learner is focused on their learning and deeply connected to the learning. Engaged learners are active participants in, and constructors of, their learning. They have relationships with their peers, teachers and the community in ways that support their investment in their work. Engaged learners seek opportunities to learn more and gain deeper understandings of their learning. They persist in the face of difficulties and are pleased with their successes. Social approval or grades do not primarily motivate engaged learners.

Learners are personally invested in an activity regardless of the end product. Learners are willing to take risks and to step outside their comfort zone. Learners want to learn more, to “master” an art form without regard for performance/evaluation. Learners internalize, personalize and express a specific experience. Working with the structure or prompts given to them by the teacher or artist, the learners exhibit a willingness to take risks and share their work with others.

2. What are the observable indicators of student engagement?

Based on the literature and the observations of a panel of educators and artists, the most salient observable indicators that learners are engaged are:

- Appropriate laughter and facial expressions—smiling, eyes open wide
- Relevant and reflective comments, observations, or questions
- Volunteering to participate
- Appearing anxious to participate---enthusiastic
- Rapid response to instructions/directions
- Body language—leaning forward, following the movement of the presenter in space
- Eye Contact—with presenter and with peers
- Students sharing ideas and thoughts with others
- Students not easily distracted by external stimuli
- Anticipating the next steps or activities in a lesson.

While this is the short list, for measurement purposes the reader may wish to refer to the more detailed list of indicators when constructing instruments designed to capture the diversity of engagement.

3. What instructional practices of teaching artists appear to facilitate student engagement?

Smith’s work in schools indicates that the following are key instructional strategies to facilitate an environment conducive to engagement:

- Opportunities to collaborate and work together

- Active, experiential instructional approaches that create space in the curriculum for student’s lives and concerns
- Implementation of democratic principles of self-determination, inclusiveness, equal participation, and deliberation—which requires making clear, visible and open the lines of authority, power and decision-making processes.
- Expansive and strong relationships between the school and the community and the home.

Key behaviors, tactics and strategies used during instruction to facilitate and support engagement in youth are:

- Demonstrating respect for individual learner
- Involving all youth early in the lesson-- requesting and inviting participation
- Using instructional tactics that facilitate involvement: wait time, redirection, preparation before lesson, modeling behavior and skills, giving clear and concise instructions, using positive reinforcement, using open-ended questions.
- Creating an emotionally safe learning environment
- Instructor being sincere, honest, supportive and encouraging
- Creating learning experiences that allow youth to make choices and decisions and to make mistakes
- Extending a lesson after the workshop—providing an extended opportunity to learn and apply

Teaching artists reported that the strategies they use during instruction to engage youth are:

- Getting youth to active participate using the body and mind
- Connecting the lesson to prior learning
- Connecting the lesson to personal interests
- Giving opportunities for youth to observing artist model/demonstrate skills and processes
- Providing opportunities for the learner to make decisions and choices
- Being respectful of individuals and appreciating their uniqueness
- Providing one-on-one instruction/support

4. How and why does the integration of the arts engage students in a learning experience?

Based on this study the results suggest that integrating the arts into core instruction appears to further engage youth in the study of the core curriculum. The artistic experience allows youth to create, perform and respond. Even the act of watching or listening to an artistic event requires some involvement from the audience, whether it is an emotional response or making meaning of what one is experiencing. The arts are inherently about activity, energy, action, meaning, connection, decision making, and reflection. The arts connect youth to themselves and others and provide an opportunity for them to examine their cultural values and beliefs. With engagement in an art activity, youth are given a method for expressing their prior experience and are permitted to discover and explore their own sensitivities and interests. Youth are invigorated by and appreciate opportunities to create, perform, and respond to art. They are also interested in watching their peers and others involved with similar processes. Consequently, when the core

curriculum is examined through the arts, youth are more engaged because the arts create an appealing mechanism that is about activity, connectedness, relevance, meaning, and autonomous decision making and aesthetic choices. To the extent that the core curriculum could be taught with the same mechanisms and features as the arts bring to the study, youth would find the core curriculum as compelling and interesting as they do the arts.

5. What is happening in the arts experience that promotes a higher level of engagement from a student?

The arts experience is about activity, about the creation of something new and the interpretation, or response to that which is being created or already exists. It is participatory and personal. The arts ask participants to reveal portions of the self and to connect themselves to something that is public (and at the same time very personal). Participation in the arts is experiential. Youth find that the opportunities of doing art allows them to use their body and mind in ways that are not conventional within the typical school day and require different levels of thought, reflection and energy. The artistic process is one of integration of the cognitive, affective, and physical domains. Thoughts, feelings, and the desire to communicate and connect one's experience to others is an exercise that brings together a variety of personal resources. When this happens in an emotionally safe and secure learning environment, with artists or educators who are sincere, supportive and encouraging, youth find that their interests grow and their skills develop in ways that are unique and profound.

Limitations

While this study was able to more fully define and describe the construct of engagement, two limitations exist that narrow the utility of this work. First, and possibly most important, the panelists of educators and teaching artists were all white individuals and many of the videotapes had classroom interactions with African-American children. This limitation clearly creates generalizability problems of this work, principally in the area of observable indicators of engagement. There is potentially a variety of ways that cultural differences exist in the expression of deep engagement among youth. Secondly, videotapes could not be directed so that all children could be observed via the camera. This required movement of the camera (panning and zooming) and limited the ability of the camera to capture the full range of activity in classrooms.

Next Steps

Descriptive research is particularly valuable when an area is being investigated for the first time. In our effort to study engagement we are faced with the challenge of creating a clear definition of what constitutes engagement and, in this study, defining engagement as a phenomena in an arts based lesson. The individual perspectives that each panel member brought to the study were helpful in broadening our understanding of engagement. With multiple perspectives, we were able to identify behavioral indicators of engagement that may have been overlooked. Clearly more discussion and observation are needed to help us further refine and identify additional features of engagement and the learning context in which student engagement can occur.

Our future plans include replicating this process several more times with panels that are more culturally and ethnically diverse. In addition, we plan to videotape and document the work of many more teaching artists. Ideally, we would include at least two cameras in a classroom to give us multiple perspectives of the environment and youth behavior as they engage in artistic activities.

This study also provided a catalyst for further inquiry and self-reflection from the panel members. By simply putting forward an open-ended question and asking the participants to answer that question, a process of self-discovery unfolded for each of the panel members. In this scenario, the question was driving the learning. What other questions might we ask of teaching artists, and could this format be adopted to include a wide range of subjects and issues for teaching artists? For example, does engagement in music look different than engagement in dance? What were the common threads of engagement that cross the disciplines and can be described as universal? Finally, we hope to understand the range of outward indicators of what is predominately a hidden state: being cognitively engaged.

Once a clear and supported definition of engagement is established, we will design an observation instrument that can be used for measuring levels of engagement in learning settings and eventually test our beliefs that art experiences and the integration of art into the curriculum is an effective student engagement approach and the learning that occurs during these experiences is richer, deeper and more meaningful to youth than are traditional methods of instruction and curriculum implementation.

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Appendix

OUTCOMES MODEL FOR STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS IN THE ARTIST-TEACHER RESIDENCY PROGRAM

INPUTS

Capacity Building For Teacher and Artist (YA Training)
Prior Knowledge, Experiences, And Skills In the Academic Curriculum and the Arts
KCYA Support and Resources

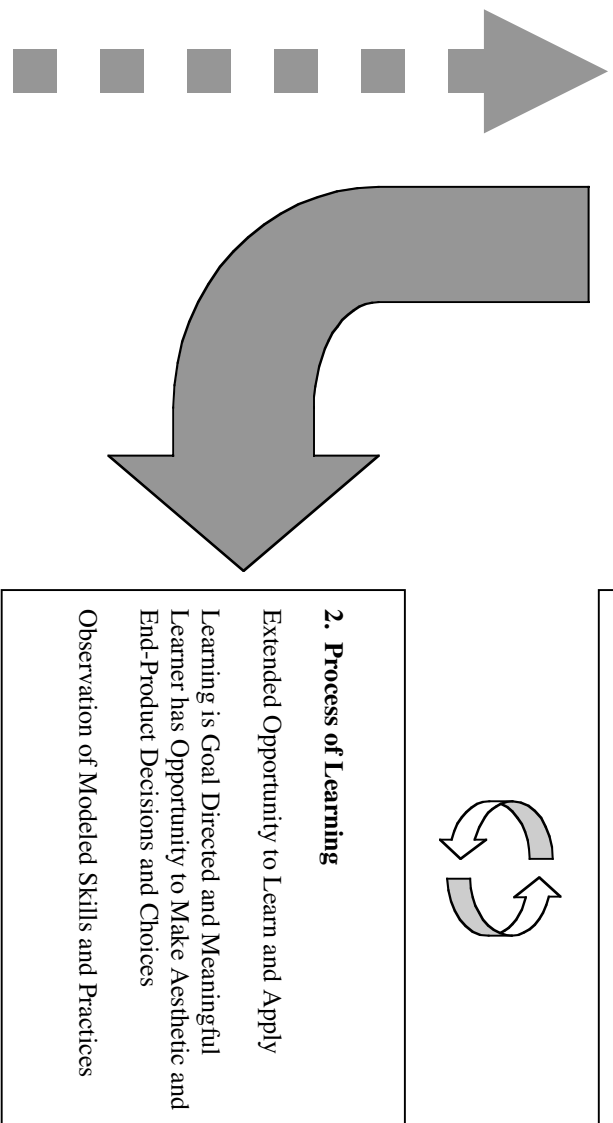
INSTRUCTIONAL EXPERIENCE

1. Content and Skill Development
New Concepts of the Arts and the Core Curriculum Introduced
New Arts-Related Skills are Introduced
Connections Between the Arts and Curriculum Are Uncovered and Made Explicit
Exposure to Arts-Related Vocabulary and Terminology

OUTCOME(S)

Learner is more Deeply **Engaged** in the Opportunity

1. Personal Investment
2. Interest/Meaning
3. Active Participation
4. Constructor of New Learnings



INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES ENGAGEMENT PROJECT APRIL, 2002

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The following questions are focused on the workshop that was videotaped. Please have artists reflect on that workshop when they respond to the following questions.

FOR ARTISTS

1. How did you make this workshop personally meaningful to students (e.g., did you connect the learning to their culture, their prior learning, their interests, their gender, their ethnicity, their neighborhood)? Please explain how you did this.
2. Did you make students aware of a goal for their participation in the workshop? When did student learning become goal directed?
3. Please describe how you actively engaged students with your art form during the workshop?
4. What choices were students offered as they were involved in the workshop (prompt on whether students had aesthetic as well as end-product choices, and what they were)?
5. Did students have opportunities to BOTH learn and to apply what they learned? Did they get to observe you performing your art form as well as hearing you describe the art form? If yes, please describe how you did this.
6. What else do you want us to know about your strategies to engage youth in your art form?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES ENGAGEMENT PROJECT APRIL, 2002

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The following questions are focused on the workshop that was videotaped. Please have students reflect on that workshop when they respond to the following questions.

FOR YOUTH

1. Compared to other things you have learned this year in school, how interesting was this workshop?

- A. A lot more interesting
- B. About the same as other things
- C. A lot less interesting

1a. Please tell me what you thought was most interesting to you about this workshop?

2. What part of the workshop was the most fun for you? (have students describe what they were doing that was the most fun).

2a. Compared to other things you have learned this year in school, how much fun was this workshop?

- A. A lot more fun
- B. About the same as other things
- C. A lot less fun

3. Did the artist give you chances to make decisions about how to make your artwork? (have students describe the choices they were given?)

4. Did you get to make something today? Would you like to do it again?