

**Young Audiences of Western New York (YA) Arts in Education Study**

**FINAL REPORT**

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This report can be downloaded in its entirety at <http://yawny.org/research/>.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to evaluate the impact of Young Audiences of Western New York's (YA) arts in education programming on students' academic, social, and behavioral development at one majority-minority, linguistically diverse, urban, persistently low achieving public school in the Western New York region. Young Audiences' presence at the school was supported by a School Improvement Grant (SIG), wherein funding for YA arts-integrated programs was provided with the goal of improving students' academic performance. As a program impact study, main objectives included identifying connections between students' participation in YA's arts programs and their academic achievement, school attendance, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem levels.

Results reflect data from interviews and observations with a total of 89 study participants. Administrators, teachers, teaching artists, and students were interviewed and YA program implementation was observed. School attendance is not discussed in this report because data did not reveal clear connections between YA programs and attendance. Similarly, investigation into emotional intelligence and self-esteem revealed data that could best be characterized by different frameworks, mainly social learning and self-efficacy.

### **Summary of Results**

#### **The Role of YA Programs in the School Curriculum**

YA programming played a distinct role in the school curriculum; primarily, arts-integrated programs supported a vision for holistic education shared by school administrators and Young Audiences staff. While the requirements of the programs were outlined by the School Improvement Grant (SIG) and SIG plan, administrators narrated awareness that the value of arts-integrated programs was not solely derived from increased academic performance and assessment scores. Administrators negotiated inclusion of the arts in the school curriculum via the SIG grant understanding that the programs would also support student creativity and self-expression, which were considered important elements of a holistic education.

The approach to arts integration narrated and enacted by study participants emphasized the materials and practices of artists to support both the academic and social growth of students. There was extensive evidence that students were not only engaging in non-arts core content, but also engaging in higher-order thinking skills (Bloom, 1956) and learning the techniques that artists in various disciplines use to create artwork. This approach to arts integration may be threatened if (1) appropriate data for documenting student progress with the presence of YA programming is not collected and (2) requisite measured outcomes do not show academic improvement in core subject areas. The school is particularly vulnerable to changes in the

quality of arts-integrated programs due to the pressure of documenting increased levels of student academic performance.

### **The Role of Teaching Artists**

Teaching artists brought with them embodied knowledge derived from their engagement with artistic practice, which ultimately influenced the standards used to evaluate student work, the feedback students received, and how students were assessed in YA programs. The instructional approaches of teaching artists were distinct from the teachers interviewed in that, as discovered in a previous study of teaching artists by Rabkin, Reynolds, Hedberg, and Shelby (2011), teaching artists were less “rule bound” than teachers (p. 52). They emphasized creativity and self-expression more so than adherence to technical criteria. Experimentation was often encouraged and teaching artists were less constrained by summative assessments. Greater attention was placed on process versus product, and mistakes were frequently viewed as a natural consequence of the creative process.

### **Activating Context Change**

The presence of teaching artists in YA programs contributed to a context change in the school environment. They introduced teachers to new arts-integrated methods of content delivery to engage students. Teachers often witnessed high levels of student engagement in YA programs, which encouraged them to implement these methods in their classrooms. Teachers also frequently saw students who struggled in non-arts subject areas succeed in YA workshops, which provided them with new perspectives on students’ potential and different strategies for helping students to succeed in the regular (non-arts) curriculum.

YA programs also allowed students to see their peers in different roles. Students who struggled in the regular school program were given opportunities to show mastery of content via arts-integrated activities. They were able to showcase their talents in front of their peers and assist other students in completing tasks. As a result, students gained new perspectives on their peers’ talents and abilities. Moreover, students were frequently positioned as equals in their knowledge levels during YA programs because they were engaging in new experiences as novices. The social and academic hierarchies present in the highly competitive environment of the regular curriculum were minimized because the criterion for success was altered.

The decreased presence of social and academic hierarchy supported greater social cohesion as diverse groups of students of varying ability, English language proficiency, and background connected through collaborative arts activities. Teaching artists often organized students into new social configurations during group activities where students who did not normally socialize were encouraged to interact. Consequently, students were given opportunities to make new connections and friendships as they worked together to solve creative problems.

Generally, a supportive school community was encouraged through engagement with YA arts experiences.

### **Formative Assessment in YA Programs**

Teaching artists were found to use formative assessment strategies in YA programs, as opposed to the summative assessment strategies that characterized high-stakes assessments. Assessment was based on student improvement, but not measured via performance, and promoted learner autonomy. Teacher and student narrations of workshop experiences revealed that ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ answers were generally not a component of project evaluation because emphasis was placed on the validity of each student’s ideas. Few students claimed they experienced failure, and for those that did experience failure, that failure was described as inability to complete a project or difficulty initiating a project.

In describing how they measured success, teaching artists claimed that student engagement in the artistic process was the main goal. All of the artists were focused on providing a positive experience for students that enriched their understanding of culture, history, identity, and/or expression. None of the artists evaluated the students according to performance standards in their respective disciplines. Instead, artistic practice was used to help students learn content that connected to other core non-arts subjects through their own interests. Teaching artists noted that student improvement in various areas was a desired outcome and that improvement was predicated on internally defined benchmarks, namely self-expression (voice) and conceptualization of ideas into form.

Formative assessment strategies that teaching artists implemented included peer teaching peer assessment, and self-assessment. Instead of externally defined benchmarks, teaching artists used highly individualized benchmarks that allowed each student to progress at their own pace. Success according to teaching artists was generally narrated as participation in arts activities and completion of projects.

### **Conceptualization and Student Voice as Standards**

As Rabkin et al. (2011) discovered in Chicago public schools, teaching artists may “[internalize] additional standards...that go well beyond the content and skills outlined in the official standards” as they “spend their lives developing what many refer to as their ‘voice’” (p. 70). They found teaching artists evaluated students’ work according to two main standards: meaning and voice. Meaning referred to students’ ability to communicate ideas by demonstrating an understanding of the subjective, contextual, and literal connotations of signs and symbols, and voice referred to self-expression. In the present study, I found teaching artists used similar standards to shape their instruction with students. I refer to these standards as conceptualization and voice, where conceptualization is slightly different from the ‘meaning’ standard provided by Rabkin et al. (2011). Conceptualization refers to students’ ability to give

form and structure to ideas, which precedes communication, and requires the development of technical skill in addition to an understanding of signs and symbols. The standards of conceptualization and voice shaped internal benchmarks that were different for each student and grew out of each student's individual development. These standards were supported by allowing students to exercise choice through artistic practice, and choice was facilitated by the freedom of experimentation that the formative assessment context allowed.

### **Voice and English Language Learners (ELLs)**

Twenty-eight percent of the students attending the site of study are English language learners, and many are refugees and newcomer immigrants who recently arrived in the United States. YA programs influenced learning for ELL students in similar ways as other students, but in regards to the development of student voice, the arts-integrated programs played a special role. YA arts integration helped ELL students gain entry into their new academic and social environment by providing opportunities for students to communicate using visual imagery and movement instead of relying more heavily on speech, and to engage in projects that did not require a high level of English proficiency to complete successfully. Multiple modes of expression in arts-integrated programs helped ELL students to socialize as they acquired new strategies for communicating with peers and teachers who did not share their first language. The increased understanding students gained due to the multimodal nature of instruction eventually led to connections between students' lived experiences and workshop content and resulted in personal connections among students and teachers. Arts-integrated programs also allowed ELL students to learn at their own pace. For students struggling to learn English while also acquiring knowledge in core subjects, individualized pacing allowed students to succeed at their respective levels.

### **Peer Teaching for Social Learning**

An instructional strategy associated with formative assessment that appeared as a consistent and prominent component of YA workshops was peer teaching. The presence and development of student ideas and voices was supported by peer teaching, which positioned students to work together to solve problems, practice methods of communication that supported task completion, negotiate with peers regarding roles and ideas on projects, and engage in democratic practices to make group decisions. Teaching artists modeled these processes for students and provided positive reinforcement by emphasizing respect for each student's input and ability to perform tasks. Students, in turn, modeled the same processes with their peers. Peer teaching activities were characterized as social learning (Bandura, 1971), wherein students learn "new patterns of behavior...through direct experience or by observing the behavior of others" (p. 3). Peer teaching experiences promoted new relationships and interactions among students, and students had opportunities to exhibit agency when they used voice to solve problems and assist their peers without depending on the voice of an adult.

### **Developing Self-Efficacy through Arts Integration**

Many of the teaching artists' instructional actions were congruent with the actions supporting self-efficacy development as defined by Bandura (1977). Self-efficacy could be developed in students due to the specific instructional approaches and processes common in YA programs, such as formative assessment strategies, standards that related to artistic practice, and social learning. The arts-integrated programs provided a relatively safe arena for students to develop their confidence in areas where they believed their skills were lacking because teaching artists provided supportive feedback and modeled behaviors that contributed to students' success. The positive reinforcement and encouragement that students received for their performance and engagement in arts practice helped to provide a foundation of successful task completion, which then formed a basis for increased self-efficacy. That self-efficacy could then carry over to other activities outside of the YA context, such as the non-arts school program, where students could apply their heightened confidence to graded tasks.

### **Student Engagement via Emotion and Visualization**

Arts-integrated workshops were often described as 'fun', involving students with content in ways that connected to their personal interests. Interviews and observations revealed that 'fun' actually connoted specific, practiced, and intentional methods for achieving program goals. Teaching artists provided avenues for student engagement with the core curriculum by combining the materials and practices of the arts with delivery of core content. Across participant groups, the emotional dimension of workshops and the visualization techniques that artists implemented were cited as important devices for student engagement.

In YA programs, emotion and visualization helped students make personal connections to the core curriculum. While not exclusive to artistic practice, emotion and visualization techniques may be commonly associated with the creation of artistic products in theatre, creative writing, music, and visual arts. Artists often use emotion as a device to connect with audiences, communicate their experience, and create meaning, and visualization may help artists discover new ideas for their work. In contrast, standardized curricula in schools may emphasize the acquisition of factual information distant from emotion and imagination, or disconnected from students' daily realities. Teaching artists brought artistic techniques via arts-integrated programs that bridged students' lived experiences with school knowledge so students could derive personal meaning from their work. This newly cultivated personal meaning fostered the engagement necessary for academic success as students invested time and attention developing skill and knowledge in core content areas.

## **Arts Access**

The site of study was a majority-minority, urban elementary school serving a large population of students with low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds. Families of low-SES may not have the resources to leave their immediate neighborhoods for arts activities or attend fee-based arts programs outside the school. For many students interviewed, YA performances and workshops provided them with new cultural experiences they did not frequently access during or after the school day. Though arts programs were included in the regular school curriculum, the programs were limited in resources, and YA programs provided experiences that were not accessible through the Art and Music courses at the school.

While exact numbers regarding the extent of arts access available to students through YA arts-integrated programs relative to arts access via other programs were not documented, it is evident that YA programs provided unique opportunities for many students. These opportunities may either augment or bridge the gap in arts access and may provide supplemental resources to the school's Art and Music programs with limited funding. Further study, possibly using quantitative methods, should be undertaken with a larger sample of students to better understand the role of YA programs in providing unique arts experiences to this student population.

## **YA Programs and Special Education**

Interviews with special education teachers revealed that YA workshops held great potential for providing meaningful arts integration experiences to students with special needs, but modifications were necessary. Specifically, more time to complete projects, consultations with teaching artists regarding instructional considerations for students with special needs prior to workshop implementation, and notification of programming in advance in order for teachers to prepare students with additional content were requested. All of the opportunities that YA programs provided to students without special needs, such as multimodal learning, self-efficacy development, individualized pacing, and engagement with core content, could be provided to students with special needs with additional time and intentional planning of workshop activities. Already existing elements of the workshops, such as technology integration and interactive projects, could be augmented. Using these elements would allow workshops to be more beneficial for students of varying abilities while retaining key qualities of the arts-integrated experiences.

## **Funding of YA Programs**

Funding of YA programs was limited. Administrators stretched funding for YA programs by inviting multiple grades to YA experiences. Even if students did not have access to YA workshops in classrooms, whole-school performances and after-school activities worked to supplement the Art and Music programs at the school. It was noted that YA arts-integrated programs did not replace the Art and Music programs provided by New York State certified

teachers because YA program content and assessment criteria differed markedly from the school arts programs. YA teaching artists employed the methods and practices of artists to support the non-arts school curriculum and implemented formative assessment strategies. In contrast, the Art and Music programs at the school were standalone arts programs that focused on arts content and implemented performance-based assessment.

Continued SIG funding of YA arts-integrated program was dependent on the production of evidence showing student academic improvement as measured by performance assessments in core subjects. However, the timing of funding disbursement affected collection of the necessary evidence. Because students were exposed to other non-arts school programs during the year, their pre-existing knowledge base shifted as the school year progressed. For pre- and post-tests of content knowledge, the research design used to measure student progress, the time of data collection influenced results. When funding was late and arts-integrated program implementation was subsequently delayed, students were already exposed to non-arts interventions. Consequently, data did not show significant improvement because results were confounded by other school programs.

YA arts-integrated programs were shown to influence the context of learning, which may not be easily measured. While it may be possible to extrapolate program impact on academic achievement through measured outcomes such as post-tests and state assessments, the impact of YA arts integrated programs often went beyond the academic development of students and influenced their social behaviors and attitudes, which were indirectly related to their academic performance in the school.

### **Young Audiences of Western New York (YA) Arts in Education Study**

During periods of economic recession and uncertainty, arts education programs in schools are some of the most vulnerable programs in the school curriculum, often subject to reductions in time and resources before other core subjects (Motto, 2010; Sabol, 2010; Smith, 2008). Commonly referred to as the “specials” in the academic curriculum, arts programs—including visual arts, music, dance and other related art forms— frequently form the coveted enrichment activities that symbolize a high quality education. When school operating budgets are reduced and academic assessments emphasize non-arts subjects as a condition of school funding, that symbolic power is often masked and the “specials” may appear extraneous in the academic program. However, across public schools serving populations of different socioeconomic backgrounds, greater investment in the arts is typically seen at the higher end of the socioeconomic spectrum (Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012); when there are greater resources available for school programs, the arts tend to be well-funded.

Historically in the U.S. context, non-profit arts organizations have filled the gap in arts access affecting schools with limited resources and that often serve populations of lower socioeconomic status (SES) by providing arts experiences to students on a contract basis (Rabkin, Reynolds, Hedberg, & Shelby, 2011). These programs are supplemental to the regular school program and differ from the arts programs that are administered by state certified school arts specialists on a consistent, periodic basis. Teaching artists typically implement these supplemental programs, which may best be described as arts enrichment or arts integration programs. In many cases, arts integrated programs are an attempt to bolster student learning and retention in non-arts courses and increase student performance on high-stakes assessments (Mishook & Kornhaber, 2006).

Many researchers have investigated the influence of these supplemental arts programs on student development and academic achievement, citing positive impact on student growth. For example, relying exclusively on teacher perceptions, Brouillette (2010) conducted a qualitative study with 12 teachers participating in an artist-in-residence program at an inner city elementary school. Interviews with the teachers revealed that the arts programs contributed to school community building, enabled multimodal learning for English language learners (ELLs), and advanced the social-emotional development of students via shared, hands-on, collaborative experiences. A second study by Brouillette (2012) focused on the San Diego Teaching Artist Project and revealed that ELLs at the elementary level with two years of involvement in the program performed better on the English language assessment test than ELLs who had no experience with the program.

Charland (2011) found that an increase in students' communication abilities during core subject courses was noted as a significant outcome of supplemental arts programs for all students (both ELLs and native English speakers) at one public elementary magnet school. For students with disabilities, Mason, Steedly, and Thormann (2008) discovered that participation in arts integrated programs resulted in greater levels of student engagement, increased communication and expressive abilities, opportunities to exercise choice making and problem solving behaviors, and individualized access to the curriculum in a manner that maximized student success.

A key element of importance in supporting the above-named areas was the opportunity for classroom teachers to develop specific pedagogical strategies by working with and learning from the teaching artists in the program. Through interviews, Charland (2011) found that teachers perceived arts integrated workshops to function as professional development. Similarly, Carlisle (2011) noted that a university sponsored arts in education partnership at a pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade majority-minority public school facilitated "collective professional development"

among school staff, graduate students, and teaching artists, which ultimately formed the basis for collaborative educational experiences with students (p. 147). Hence, the team approach of teaching artists during workshop implementation enabled professional development opportunities for school staff that, in turn, had a positive impact on student learning.

Other studies investigate the influence of arts programs as a whole regardless of program type, including all in-school and supplementary art programs provided by both certified arts teachers and non-profit partnerships. A mixed methods study of arts programs in five New York City majority-minority (i.e., minority students comprise the majority of the school population), arts-based public high schools revealed the collective positive influence of arts programs on student growth. Using student surveys, focus group interviews, school site information, and New York City Department of Education reports, Maguire, Donovan, Mishook, Gaillande, and García (2012) discovered that students with higher GPAs tended to have greater access to arts learning experiences. The high school with the greatest level of arts access in the sample of five schools exhibited the highest levels of student abilities in all areas. In 2008, all of the arts-based high schools in the sample had higher graduation rates than the average rate of the district (Maguire et al., 2012, p. 386). However, it is difficult to draw definite conclusions regarding the relationship between student growth and arts involvement due to the specific entrance requirements of the arts-based high schools in New York City, which may have produced a biased, or non-representative, study sample.

In a report sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, Catterall, Dumais, and Hampden-Thompson (2012) provide a detailed analysis of longitudinal, quantitative data drawn from four large-scale databases sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Labor (NELS: 88, ECLS-K, ELS-2002, and NLSY97) to investigate the relationship between arts education programs (both in-school and supplementary) and students'

academic and social development over several years' time. Students included in the sample ranged from five to 27 years of age. Across SES, the researchers found higher levels of academic achievement and civic engagement, and higher rates of college attendance for students with greater participation in arts programs. The greatest number of statistically significant positive associations between arts involvement and academic achievement was found for students with low-SES backgrounds. In other words, the relationship between arts involvement and academic achievement was especially pronounced for low-income students.

Focusing solely on arts integration programs provided by classroom teachers, Hardiman, Rinne, and Yarmolinskaya (2014) presented findings from an experimental study with a randomized sample of fifth-grade African American students in four classrooms at a low-SES urban elementary school. The researchers hypothesized that arts integrated learning promoted retention, in part, because arts-infused activities contributed to student engagement. Students received instruction in one of two types of science curricula over the course of three weeks: an arts integrated science curriculum and a science curriculum without arts integration. Data in the form of scores on a delayed post-test revealed greater retention of lesson content for students who received arts integrated science instruction, and students at the lowest level of reading proficiency displayed the greatest level of retention. Essentially, the greatest gains were seen among students in the experimental group with the lowest reading performance.

Cumulatively, the studies described above cite positive relationships between arts in education programs and student academic and social development. However, quantitative data was drawn from large or small samples of students, and qualitative data was either drawn exclusively from students (Maguire et al., 2012) or exclusively from teachers (Brouillette, 2010, 2012). An existing gap in literature can be noted in the limited availability of studies that collect data (quantitative and/or qualitative) from multiple stakeholders involved in arts education

programs to investigate the relationship of arts involvement with student academic and social development. Additionally, while the recent (as of 2015) experimental study by Hardiman et al. (2014) is one of the first of its kind to be conducted on arts integration in schools, the researchers' hypothesis on the positive relationship between student engagement and arts integration and their subsequent results showing student retention of content deserve further investigation with a larger student sample.

The present study attends to the gap in research through the collection of qualitative data from multiple stakeholders—teachers, teaching artists, school administrators, and students—at one public elementary school to investigate the relationship between arts integrated programs and students' academic and social development. The study also builds on previous research by taking a qualitative approach to better understand arts integration in schools in the context of supplementary arts programs, and uses a relatively large qualitative data set in comparison to many previous qualitative arts education studies, with a total of 89 study participants.

The school site is a majority-minority, linguistically diverse, public elementary school serving a student population of predominately low-SES with a sizable number (28% ) of English Language Learners (ELLs) (New York State Department of Education, 2014). Thus, the study extends research regarding the influence of supplementary arts programs on minority, multilingual, and low-SES student populations. Moreover, because the study site is unique among sites included in previous studies due to its designation as a SIG (School Improvement Grant) school, a designation provided to the lowest-performing schools in a state (Hurlburt, Le Floch, Therriault, & Cole, 2011), the present study may provide valuable insight related to arts integration in the context of a high-pressure assessment environment.

This research study additionally serves a practical function. It can best be characterized as a program impact study, in which main objectives include identifying significant connections

between arts programs provided by one non-profit organization, Young Audiences of Western New York (YA), and students' academic and social development. Information from this study may inform future development of Young Audiences' partnership with the school site. To date, a program impact study of Young Audiences' arts in education programs has not been conducted. The present study is designed to dually expand understanding of YA programs at a school where the organization has maintained a strong presence for several years while more broadly relating to arts education research conducted across school sites serving majority-minority and low-SES student populations.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In discussion of the role of the arts in schools, advocacy arguments in support of time and resources for arts programs tend to fall under two main theses: the arts hold intrinsic value and/or the arts serve an instrumental role. The intrinsic value argument situates the arts as a stand-alone subject of interest wherein the primary role of arts education is to “produce particular ways of knowing and being in the world” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013) that enhance students' habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). Intrinsic value is assumed in the call for ‘art for art’s sake’. Arts education shaped by this line of thinking may or may not be interdisciplinary in nature, but outcomes are geared toward the acquisition of skills and knowledge related to the history of art and the studio practice of artists. In contrast, the instrumental thesis positions the arts as a field of practice in service to other subjects, particularly subjects falling within the assessment focus of the most current education reforms or school funding foci. The arts-as-instrument advocacy platform utilizes the techniques and practices of artists throughout history and the present day to produce outcomes in the form of higher standardized test scores and higher levels of achievement in other academic subjects, such as Math, Science, and ELA, for example.

Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) has characterized both advocacy arguments as the “rhetoric of effects,” which necessitate an “idealization of the arts...[that] dangerously flattens the complexity as well as dilutes the richness of those cultural practices that are sometimes, although not always necessarily, associated with the concept of ‘the arts’” (pp.638-639), and any idealization of the arts ultimately results in a whitewashing of on-the-ground accounts of arts in practice. This rhetoric of effects is the result of an obsession with measurement and an almost religious belief in the tools of measurement, which may, all too often, define the limits of knowledge regarding what has value in education. Areas of practice difficult to measure, in part because adequate tools of measurement have not been developed, are frequently assigned the default designation of holding little to no value in the school program.

It is important to acknowledge that what we are able to see is limited by our tools of perception and measurement, and what is not seen cannot be measured. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* requires school program implementation to be grounded in “scientifically based research” defined by

experimental or quasiexperimental designs in which individuals, entities, programs, or activities are assigned to different conditions and with appropriate controls to evaluate the effects of the condition of interest, with a preference for random-assignment experiments, or other designs to the extent that those designs contain within-condition or across-condition controls. (p. 540)

The difficulty in conducting such research on the arts is that the arts constitute an area of practice deeply integral to daily living—that of culture. Thus, it is challenging to isolate the effects of the arts in a manner suitable for experimental and quasiexperimental research design. Moreover, the arts’ mutable nature further complicates measurement; art is an elusive construct to define. As Gaztambide-Fernández notes, “culture is constantly being made and remade though the symbolic

work that pervades people's lives" (p. 639). Arts activities and techniques are frequently in flux, which impacts and alters influence on other fields of practice and, hence, problematizes measurement in education.

Difficulties associated with quantifying and qualifying arts education have contributed to the current status of the arts in schools. Arts subjects, such as Music, Visual Arts, and Dance, presently occupy a vulnerable position in the daily school program. High-stakes assessments associated with ELA, Science, and Math often siphon time and resources away from arts education programs and shift attention towards what is commonly referred to as arts integration. Arts integration can be described as arts education that "involves the combination to some degree, or the connections between two or more of the traditional disciplines or subjects,... [and that strives] to infuse the arts across school disciplines" (Russell & Zembylas, 2007, p. 289). Arts integration is strongly connected to the rhetoric of effects, and a large number of studies, as described above, have been conducted highlighting the positive influence of arts integration as it relates to student academic and social development in support of arts advocacy platforms.

The field of arts education has a long history of association with arguments for the intrinsic value of the arts ('art for art's sake'). Certified arts teachers provide arts courses in schools exposing students to the practices, methods, techniques, and history of different art disciplines. These courses are not explicitly required to improve student performance in other core academic subjects, though these courses may do so. Art and Music are not taught in service to student achievement in Math or ELA any more than Math or ELA are taught to help students acquire knowledge in the arts. Instead, arts teachers provide students with a grade for their performance in arts activities as stand-alone subjects of interest with no expectation that students demonstrate mastery of other core subject knowledge. Conversely, teaching artists are often placed in schools specifically to provide arts enrichment and arts integration activities in service

to other non-arts courses. An emblematic example of the difference between arts education and arts integration is provided in a statement by one teaching artist with a background in K-12 visual art education who was interviewed for the present study. She noted a difference between her previous experience as an educator and her new experience as a teaching artist while describing her approach to YA program implementation: "...I was focused on art, visual art, in terms of the end product. In fact, I look at art, visual art, as a discipline unto itself." Essentially, the arts programs in the current study may be best characterized as arts integration.

In the present study, I focus on the body of literature addressing arts integration and its role in education instead of arts education for a few reasons. First, the present investigation is focused on a non-profit arts organization that provides arts integrated programs via teaching artists. The findings of previous studies on arts integration provide a foundation to support a rich understanding of the data collected. Secondly, the current study is structured as a program impact study wherein the main goal is to better understand the influence of arts programs on student growth. Thus, the study itself operationalizes the rhetoric of effects, specifically the arts-as-instrument approach, as a rationale for study. Third, as a SIG school impacted by assessment pressures, arts integration offers the opportunity to both strengthen the presence of arts programs at the school and reinforce tested subject areas. At this particular school site, arts integration is an attempt to supplement valuable arts experiences that are in jeopardy due to reductions in time and resources. Instrumentality of the arts characterizes the school environment, and the arts integration literature provides insight into this particular context and characterization of supplemental arts programs.

It is important to point out that I do not myself aim to employ the rhetoric of effects in my analysis and discussion of results. I am not claiming to measure the effects of the arts, and instead aim only to describe actions and behaviors that were commonly associated with the arts

integrated programs under study. Additionally, it may be most accurate to describe the role of arts integration in the school environment instead of implying causation by linking arts programs to specific growth trajectories. Indeed, it is not possible to measure specific outcomes of YA arts programs and procedures in concrete terms due to the research design selected. However, this qualitative study may outline the processes that characterize arts integrated programs at the school and, in doing so, provide valuable information regarding student achievement in a context saturated with arts integration. Cumulatively, the communicated views of stakeholders at the school point toward actions, behaviors, and perspectives associated with arts involvement.

### **Method**

The present study was funded by private donations to Young Audiences of Western New York as a program impact study. The purpose of the study was to better understand the impact of the organization's arts programs on students' academic and social development at one elementary school where the organization has cultivated a longstanding and close working relationship with school administration and staff. Thus, this study can best be described as a qualitative, single-site case study (Merriam, 2009). Young Audiences of Western New York (YA) was founded in 1962 and has been providing arts programming in Western New York schools for 53 years. It is the regional affiliate of Young Audiences, Inc. and belongs to a network of 30 Young Audiences locations across the United States.

### **Site of Study**

Site selection was predicated on YA's strong presence at one school, Linwood Elementary<sup>1</sup>, which enabled a case study approach and access to a large number of participants with exposure to YA programming. Several YA programs of varying depth and breadth have

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<sup>1</sup> pseudonym

been implemented at the school over the past four academic years (2011-2015) ranging from one-day workshops to extended artist-in-residence programs lasting several weeks' time. Most teachers noted extensive experience with YA programs that exceeded the most recent four academic years. Beginning in 2002, the organization had implemented programming at the school before an approximate five-year hiatus that ended with the current principal's placement at Linwood Elementary in 2011. An interview with the principal revealed that re-establishment of YA programs at the school was primarily due to his efforts. It is the most recent four-year block of time coinciding with his placement that the present study references.

Linwood Elementary is a majority-minority public elementary school (preK-8) serving a student population of predominately low SES with a relatively high percentage of English language learners. According to publicly available New York State school report card data, 87% of students are economically disadvantaged and 86% of students are minorities (New York State Department of Education, 2014). A total of 28% of students are limited English proficient (New York State Department of Education, 2014) in comparison to an average of 14% in city public schools across the U.S. (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Linwood Elementary is located in a highly racially and economically segregated school system in the Western New York region. More specifically, it is located in a rustbelt city within New York State, a state recently found to possess the most segregated schools in the country, according to a report released by UCLA's Civil Rights Project (Kuscera & Orfield, 2014). In addition, the percentage of students with special needs at the school is 19% (New York State Department of Education, 2014), slightly higher than the total state enrollment of 16.1% in the 2011-2012 school year (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

Linwood Elementary serves a large number of multilingual students who are newcomers to the U.S. Many are refugees who have relocated to the Western New York region with their families from Asian and African countries. Several languages other than English are spoken at the school including, but not limited to, Arabic, Burmese, Somali, Bengali, Portuguese, French, Kirundi, Lao, Swahili, Spanish, Chin, Karen, Tigrinya, Nepali, Mai-Mai, Kurukh, Albanian, Chinese, Kizigua, Uzbek, Turkish, Sango, Minangkabau, Afrikaans, Kpelle, Karenni, and Farsi.

Linwood Elementary is a persistently low-achieving school that became eligible for a School Improvement Grant (SIG) in 2013 after being the first school in the city threatened with closure in 2012. In 2013, it became one of two Young Audiences full partnership schools, in which YA programs are brought into the school on a year-round basis. YA programs are funded, in part, by the three-year School Improvement Grant associated with the school's low-achieving status to support the turnaround plan approved by the City Board of Education. Written into the Linwood Elementary turnaround plan is the implementation of arts integrated curricula as an avenue for engaging all students in the school program, with a special emphasis on the school's large population of ELLs and students with special needs. To achieve this end, the plan states that the school will continue to develop and pursue private, non-profit, and college or university partnerships (New York State Department of Education, 2013). Young Audiences is the main non-profit arts organization providing arts-integrated programs at the school.

### **Participants**

Participants in the study included administrators, teachers, teaching artists, and students<sup>2</sup>. An estimated 450 out of an approximate total of 830 students were involved in Young Audiences

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<sup>2</sup> All participants in the study, with the exception of administrators, are labeled in interview transcripts according to participant group with an assigned number to protect identities (for example: Teacher #, Teaching Artist #, Student #). See appendix for a complete list of numbered students with associated grade levels.

programs during the 2014-2015 academic school year. For the present study, recruitment targeted close to 25% of these students because they were more likely to remember and describe their recent experiences with YA programs in greater detail. Students were recruited via an information session at the school and letters sent home to parents. Initially, study design

Table 1  
*Student Totals by Grade Level*

Grade	# of Students
K	6
1	2
2	2
3	18
4	6
5	6
6	5
7	15
8	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>

Table 2  
*Teaching Artist Totals by Program, Number of Sessions, and Grade Level*

# of TAs	YA Program Title	Sessions	Grade
2	Phonics Program Alphabet Awareness Residency	8 (+1 performance)	K
1	Building STEAM -Blending Math, Art, and Technology	4 (+1 virtual session)	6
1	Slave Songs	1	8
1	Letters from the Underground, Poetry Word Train	4	8
1	African Dance	1	8
1	The Sherlock Holmes Method of Creative Writing	17	7
1	Arts 4 Learning	9	3
1	Story Cloths: Quilt Designs That Tell Stories	2	K-6, 8

included a random purposeful sample (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) of students, but due to the low number of parent consent forms received, all students with parent consent who assented to participate in research were enrolled in the study. Students were also underenrolled; a total of 61 of the targeted 115 students participated in the study (see Table 1). Due to privacy and confidentiality concerns, specific demographic information for the student sample cannot be provided. However, it should be noted that the student sample was racially and ethnically diverse and included students across grade levels who had direct experience with either YA performances in the school auditorium or YA workshops.

A total of 18 teachers who assisted with YA program implementation, including special education teachers, were interviewed. Of these teachers, three taught kindergarten, one taught both kindergarten and first grade, six taught third grade, six taught sixth grade, one taught both seventh and eighth grades, and one taught only seventh grade. While some of the teachers taught all subjects within the grade, others focused on specific areas; three taught English as a Second Language (ESL), four were Special Education teachers, two taught English Language Arts (ELA), one taught Social Studies, and one teacher worked in a 611 classroom with students labeled as Emotionally Disturbed (ED) (see Table 3). At the time of the study, all of the teachers interviewed had worked with Young Audiences teaching artists or attended Young Audiences

Table 3  
*Teachers with Associated Grade Levels and Focus Areas*

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Focus Area</b>
1	3	ESL
2	3	Special Education
3	3	Classroom
4	3	Classroom
5	3	Classroom
6	7 and 8	Social Studies
7	611 Classroom	Special Education
8	K	Classroom
9	K and 1	ESL
10	K	Classroom
11	K	Classroom
12	6	Classroom
13	6	Special Education
14	6	ELA
15	7	ELA
16	6	ESL
17	6	Special Education
18	6	Classroom

performances within the past year. Many had extensive experience with Young Audiences programs spanning several years' time.

Many, but not all, of the teaching artists who implemented YA programs with teachers within the 2014-2015 year were interviewed, amounting to a total of eight (out of 12). One additional teaching artist was observed during two workshop sessions, but not interviewed. All nine teaching artists implemented arts integrated programs in workshop format that resulted in student-produced work or student performances. One artist implemented an arts and technology (STEAM) program, another artist implemented a dance-based workshop, a third artist implemented a visual arts-based workshop, and a fourth artist implemented a music-based workshop. Four of the remaining artists were involved with ELA related workshops, and one artist implemented no workshops, but was a workshop program creator who had implemented programs at the school in the past and was present for the final student performances. Many of the workshops provided were interdisciplinary in nature and often included elements of one or more arts disciplines and academic subjects (see Table 2). Seven of the artists included in the study had implemented workshops as part of an artist-in-residence program at the school. In addition, two of the artists implemented workshops lasting one session (one day) at the school site. The other six artists implemented several workshop sessions ranging from four to 17 workshops total.

Two administrators closely associated with YA implementation at Linwood Elementary were interviewed: the principal, who was largely responsible for YA's presence at the school, and an assistant principal, who worked closely with YA's education director to plan and schedule arts integrated programming. The principal has been at the school since the 2011-2012 school year and the assistant principal arrived shortly thereafter in 2013 when her position as

School Administration Manager/ Assistant Principal was created and funded by the School Improvement Grant. At the time of the study, there were two other assistant principals working at the school.

### **Data Collection**

Qualitative data for this study was collected primarily through interviews. Interviews with students in grades K through 8 lasted from five to 30 minutes in duration, and each student was interviewed once after assenting to participate in the study. Individual interviews with teachers typically lasted between 15 to 25 minutes, and individual interviews with the two administrators lasted approximately 30 minutes. Teaching artist interviews were longer in duration and typically lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. One 60-minute focus group interview was conducted with six teachers and two teaching artists present after each participant was individually interviewed.

Individual interviews followed a semi-structured format (Merriam, 2009) and questions centered on five main areas: YA programs, academic achievement, school attendance, self-esteem, and emotional intelligence (see Appendix B, C, and D). Questions were open-ended, and I altered the line of questioning when and where necessary in order to prompt participants to elaborate more fully on their responses or clarify narratives that were revealing holes in the planned interview questions. For example, the question, 'What are the opportunities for success or failure available to students through the YA arts programs?,' was augmented with follow-up questions related to the presence of right or wrong answers and how those answers were defined. The addition of follow-up questions allowed me to pursue the pronounced pattern I was hearing in participant narratives regarding assessment and evaluation in YA programs in comparison to

the regular school program. I added additional questions frequently, and these will be reflected in the snippets of data woven throughout the results section of this report.

A total of six teachers and two teaching artists participated in the hour-long focus group interview, which included questions similar to the individual interview questions (see Appendix E). The focus group interview was primarily used to document and observe any differences or similarities in the narrations of artists and teachers when discussing YA programs together. Resulting focus group statements mirrored much of what was captured during individual interviews, though some of the conclusions teachers made regarding the role of YA programs in the school environment were more clearly conceptualized and articulated during the focus group session. Because the focus group interview occurred after individual interviews with teachers, it is probable that clarity was a result of more time to consider responses before similar questions were presented again.

Only two observations of workshop sessions with one teaching artist, in which I took on the role of non-participant observer, were included as data. Originally, multiple teaching artists were slated for observation, but due to changes in the study timeline, this was not possible. Instead, I have relied almost entirely on other data sources to obtain a clearer picture of workshop content and instruction; narrative descriptions from multiple participants provide different perspectives on YA programs, and the YA workshop record, written program descriptions, and student work are used in place of additional firsthand observations. However, because the present study is primarily concerned with investigating the impact of the programs on student growth and included a large sample of participants (particularly for a qualitative study), enough data was gathered to adequately address the research questions.

**Bias and Validity**

A statement regarding research positionality is often warranted in qualitative research projects because the researcher is “the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 2009, p.15). As an artist and a New York State certified art educator with an active studio practice, I am inclined to believe the arts hold both an intrinsic and instrumental role in education. In my own life, I have culled both personal and professional value from the arts and I have invested time, energy, and resources into art making and art education. Reductions in funding for the arts affect both myself and my colleagues and result in decreased opportunity to exercise our craft. Therefore, conducting this research study on the impact of arts integrated programs on student growth does not come without inherent bias. But, interestingly, that bias has two dimensions, which may work to partially balance my perspective as a researcher. First, as someone invested in the field of art education, I stand to lose if time and resources shift from in-school art education programs to arts-integrated programs provided by teaching artists on a contract basis. Teaching artists may provide art experiences at a lower cost and time commitment than arts teachers, and without the associated benefits of a full-time, in-school teaching position. Positive results of arts integration programs may contribute to rhetoric and policy supporting further reductions to in-school arts education. On the other hand, this study stands to advance understanding of how artistic practice and arts involvement might influence human development, which may favorably affect the arts in general. Thus, my dual role as artist and art educator may assist me in approaching the existent tensions between arts integration and arts education in a more neutral manner. However, bias does still remain in the fact that I am more likely to view the arts in a favorable light, which impacts my ability to remain objective and identify negative patterns in the data. Throughout my analysis, I strive to provide a balanced

representation of data across participants. I rely on participant narrations, observations, and prior research to develop the results section of this report.

### **Data Analysis**

All data collected during interview sessions and observations were transcribed before being transferred to qualitative research software (HyperResearch). Data was then coded according to a total of 41 codes (or topics); a code frequency chart is included in Appendix F. The codes served primarily to organize data in a manner more conducive to identifying patterns and themes that were consistent across participant narrations and observations. Included below are the results of analysis; it should be noted that the strongest patterns related to changes in the school learning context, assessment in YA arts integrated programs versus the non-arts integrated curriculum, and student voice.

## **Results**

### **Funding for YA Programs**

According to the school improvement plan and the administrators interviewed, YA programs are brought into Linwood Elementary as part of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) to support core subjects and connect with the Common Core State Standards via arts integrated curricula. In the past, the SIG has been supplemented by additional funding from the Children's Foundation, the Young Audiences J.C. Penney Fund, General Mills, Target, Young Audiences National, York Children's Foundation and one Western New York councilmember. However, the SIG grant currently constitutes a large percentage of program funding. Whereas in the past Young Audiences provided up to approximately \$18,000 in funding supplemented by school funding in the range of \$1,000, now school sources provide approximately \$10,000 in comparison to Young Audiences' \$3,000.

In order to schedule any specific YA workshop at the school, workshop content had to first match specific criteria in line with the Linwood Elementary school improvement plan. The administration was under significant pressure to provide justification for funding these programs, which was provided in the form of concrete data to various funding sources of arts integrated programs. In some cases, funding was not available for the desired programs that would target the data needed by the school to show improvement. Explicit alignment of workshop content with Core Standards, however, was noted as beneficial for gaining financial support of YA programs.

**Principal:** I'd have certain grades we have needs with, specific needs. But, there might not be an artist-in-residence that does something that meets those needs. Or, there might be one, but there's no money to fund that one. There's money to fund the Erie Canal [YA program], which everyone loves the Erie Canal [program], [but] it doesn't necessarily connect up with our data or what we need. I think we've coordinated with Young Audiences [and] with the Common Core, and [the YA director of education] has done some great work with seeing how the artists-in residence cross over with the Common Core, which is then easier for us to say, "Here's how it meets the standards."

The goal of increasing student performance and scores on state assessments shaped program selection; SIG funding was allotted specifically for that purpose. Both administrators explicitly stated that arts integration was a major strategy for raising test scores, which was reflected in the 2013 approved transformation plan.

**Assistant Principal:** Since I've been at [the school], we have been very lucky because we have a SIG grant that we use, which is the School Improvement Grant, that we have been provided because we are a persistently low achieving school—labeled by the state—and so we receive money to do programming and improvements that we feel will help our students. We have decided to use some of those funds to provide arts integration for our students. We use a minimum of 10,000 dollars a year to provide arts integration for our students at our school. We have given our students in multiple grades many, many programs through Young Audiences—from individual classes to full grade levels to after-school programming to special family concerts, all kinds of programming provided from Young Audiences to fulfill different types of arts enrichment—from technology to dance to music integration to hands-on art to writing to dance modalities to poetry, all different kinds of arts to our students.

Funding for YA programs was limited, which resulted in only a few grades in the school receiving YA artist-in-residence workshops within any academic year. Administrators strived to reach the maximum number of students when scheduling YA programming, stretching funding allotted for arts integration to its full capacity. While all grade levels may not have been exposed to YA workshops within one school year, multiple grade levels were invited to attend YA performances in the school theater to increase students' exposure to the arts.

**Assistant Principal:** Our children are exposed to Art and Music and then do receive Young Audiences programming as well. It's a very nice balance. I think we do have a well-roundedness because even if children did not have a full program in their grade level, they at least went and saw the culminating activity or they participated in the [cellist's] showcase. Or, they came to the Green Festival, or they went to the Underground Railroad show, or the Erie Canal concert. Even kids who did not have a specific curriculum program in their classroom, when we've had concerts or showcases, we always invite other grade levels to come and take part in those activities. So, all kids get a flavor of some kind of programming we have.

Students did attend Art and Music during the academic year, but their level of access to these courses decreased in recent years due to time and resource reductions. YA programs do not fill in the gaps left by the shrinkage of in-school arts programs. Art and Music function as stand-alone subjects in the curriculum as opposed to arts-integrated subjects. In Art and Music, the arts do not function as a support for other academic subjects, such as Math or ELA, and the emphasis lies in learning the practices and techniques of artists and musicians. As the principal stated, YA programs

do work sympathetically with [the] music and art program, but really [do not] compensate at all for the reductions in Music and Art. What it does do is teach the [non-arts] curriculum in a way that's more exciting and interesting.

YA programs are arts-integrated programs that function to bolster the curriculum of focus: core subjects tied to high-stakes assessments. The continued existence of these programs in the school relies on the production of evidence in support of improvement to the core subject areas.

For some programs, concrete data could be collected, but evidence showing improvement was dependent on the specific time within the school year that students were exposed to programming.

**Assistant Principal:** This year we did fund [the phonics] program with the kindergarten, but we implemented it in November and December, which—we had much stronger results.

**Darlene García Torres (DGT):** What does that mean?

**Assistant Principal:** Because the kids already knew all their [alphabet] letters and sounds last year when we did it in the spring as opposed to [when] they were just learning their [alphabet] letters and sounds [in the fall]. So, you actually could see data, whereas there was no change in data last year when we did that.

Disbursement of funding influenced the timing of YA programs; for example, in the 2013-2014 academic year, funding arrived late for implementation of the phonics program described above, so the program was scheduled after the students had already learned their alphabet letters and sounds via the regular curriculum. The program did not produce strong evidence of improvement because students' pre-existing knowledge base precluded any observation of change in student growth.

In education research, it is often difficult to parse out the effects of programs because students may be exposed to many different methods of instruction and curricula within any one block of time. Without an intentionally implemented experimental or quasiexperimental research design, evaluation of a specific intervention remains elusive. YA programs were subject to measurement at the time of program occurrence in the absence of intentional study protocol and, yet, funding was predicated on documented outcomes. Results may have been confounded by other factors. Moreover, many of the processes and pedagogical strategies of arts integration programs may seep into the school environment and curriculum as a whole, as is often the original intention, and are difficult to disentangle from the effects of other traditional or mainstream curricula in a quantitative manner. The nature of arts integration, which is to

provide an interdisciplinary context in support of core subjects outside of the arts, does not easily lend itself to individuated quantitative evaluation of programs, making the data necessary for securing future arts integrated programming in the school difficult to collect.

**DGT:** Do you see that improvement in academics? I know it's difficult to really measure, to really accurately describe that in words.

**Assistant Principal:** I think so, though. I think you see improvements in academics in multiple ways. Like in kindergarten, through the phonics program, you definitely saw an increase in academics because you were testing a specific thing. Yes, they knew this many letters and this many sounds in November when we started and knew this many letters and this many sounds in December when we ended. So, yes, you could see there's a beginning and an end.

**DGT:** You specifically tested before and after that program?

**Assistant Principal:** Yes.

**DGT:** Is that a requirement?

**Assistant Principal:** Yes.

**DGT:** Because of the funding?

**Assistant Principal:** Yes, we could see, boom boom [emphasis with hands on the table]. But with the writing program or with [the STEAM arts and technology program], is there concrete data like that? No. But can you see the kids having an increased drive? Can you see the kids remembering and processing and changing their writing style or using bigger words like [the teaching artist] taught them or implementing a new strategy that they learned through poetry with the Underground Railroad [teaching artist]? How they were kind of comic booking and how you see kids doing that at lunchtime and taking parts of books that they're writing—so yes, you can see that it's affecting their learning.

The YA programs were described as influencing the context and learning environment of the school as a whole. The principal explained, “Young Audiences is ingrained in our [school] culture.” It is difficult to accurately capture context and to measure an environment that is created when the focus of measurement is on the outcomes of actions taken within that context and not on the context itself. According to several interviewed teachers, YA programs provided a foundation and a reference point from which to base learning in the core curriculum. In a sense, arts integration may provide a supportive environment for student growth in the SIG target areas, but connecting context to growth with documentation is a complex task.

**Teacher 14:** Young Audiences—the programming, the guest speakers, the people that come in and perform help [students] add to their schema of thoughts about understanding

the world around them, so that when they do come to a discussion piece in class it could be used as an example from a teacher's perspective. I could use that as an example and, from a student's perspective, because of their experience, they can make connections with the character that they read about in class.

**DGT:** So, do you use the Young Audiences experiences as a reference point then?

**Teacher 14:** Because all of us are having the same experience, I try to, yes.

**DGT:** And that kind of strengthens their connections to the content or the characters?

**Teacher 14:** Yes, because there aren't a lot of commonly shared experiences. So, when we do have one, it's really important for us to refer to it, to make reference to it in any way that we can. For example, we had a jazz performance by two men and one of the stories that we were to read later on in the school year was then brought closer to the experience so that we can compare.

**DGT:** So, a question. Why is it important to reference those similar experiences?

**Teacher 14:** To make connections, for students to make connections... Upon making—

**DGT:** To content or to each other or—?

**Teacher 14:** All of the above. With content and then with each other and because of those experiences, maybe they're sharing their own personal experience [that reflects] something that they've all experienced so that there's some kind of connection.

**DGT:** Like social cohesion?

**Teacher 14:** Just learning from each other and with each other.

As discussed further in later sections of this report, shared personal connections created meaningful learning experiences for students and increased engagement in core content.

Teachers were also able to integrate group YA experiences into their own classroom instruction to support student achievement.

### **The Role of YA Programs in the School Curriculum**

The partnership between Young Audiences and Linwood Elementary was enabled through a shared vision of the arts' role in providing a holistic education for students.

Administrators articulated a belief in the importance of attending to the 'whole' child, connoting an approach to learning as a multidimensional process. For the administrators interviewed, academic performance reflected just one of many dimensions of a child's experience and growth in school. With holistic education as a goal, value was placed on the inclusion of arts education in the school program and opportunities for students to exercise and develop creativity and self-expression.

**Principal:** I think at the core if you're engaging kids and asking them to grow and meeting their needs for creativity and self-expression and intellectual exploration, they will grow. The programming we do helps to meet those needs and balances out some of the—probably some of the damage we do with the real competitive, standards-driven stuff we have to do. And if we don't do it, they're going to close the school, so we have to do it. But, I think if you just do that, you're not dealing with the whole kid [shifts to a more serious tone] and you wind up not doing it as well because you can't just drive and drive and drive without growing too. I don't want to make it seem like Young Audiences is a break from growing because the programming we do with Young Audiences has helped our kids to grow intellectually, to grow academically, to bring strength and skills to the more pure academics.

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**Assistant Principal:** When I met [the YA director of education], we decided that we should put more money in because she had some great ideas... and we have the same views on the importance of arts in education being molded together as well. So, really [we] have the same vision for the type of instruction students need and how students learn best, and so I think that kind of influenced how we have approached the implementation of Young Audiences at our school.

While the administrators acknowledged the need for YA programs to fall in line with the school improvement grant (SIG) and approved plan, they narrated awareness that the programs served students in ways that may not have been strictly defined by the core standards, desired measurable outcomes, and the data they needed to produce. Thus, from an administrative perspective that was also echoed by many of the teachers interviewed, inclusion of arts-integrated curricula in the school program was not exclusively derived from the need to increase student academic achievement in non-arts subjects, though funding was assigned for this purpose. Additionally, the arts were viewed as challenging activities, as opposed to 'a break from growing,' indicating that administrators did not rigidly subscribe to SIG supported definitions of student growth, which emphasized non-arts areas of the curriculum and the academic dimension of student development. In consideration of the significant pressures placed on administrators to meet SIG criteria, their expressed beliefs regarding the role of schooling in student development appears uncompromised and deeply held. It was these beliefs that guided

the methods administrators selected for SIG implementation as they carefully negotiated the inclusion of the arts in the school program.

Such an approach to arts integration stands in contrast to a subservient approach described by Bresler (1995) in her study of arts integration implementation across a sample of schools. A subservient approach to arts integration utilizes the arts solely to teach a non-arts curriculum with little attempt to engage students in the methods and practices of artists and the development of higher-order cognitive skills (Bresler, 1995). However, because funding is allocated for YA programs specifically to improve SIG target areas, arts integration at Linwood Elementary runs the risk of falling into the subservient approach as time progresses. Justification for continued YA program implementation requires evidence of measured outcomes in non-arts subject areas, and programs that cannot produce such data may be threatened with elimination. If faced with the choice of eliminating programs entirely or modifying YA programs, administration may opt for the latter in an attempt to maintain some form of arts programming at the school versus none. Past research has documented a pattern of subservient arts integration in schools serving low-SES populations as these schools tend to be the most susceptible to low test scores (Mishook & Kornhaber, 2006) and high-stakes assessments in the era of education reform associated with the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) and *Race to the Top* (RttT).

### **The Role of Teaching Artists**

Teaching artists implemented all YA programs, and they brought with them expertise cultivated through years of training and practice in their respective fields. The delivery of content was shaped by their artistic and educational philosophies, which, while individually characterized for each teaching artist, possessed common threads reflecting engagement in artistic practice. This embodied knowledge enabled artists to involve students with core

curricula in new ways, many times reaching students who had difficulty connecting with content via non-arts integrated classroom instruction. Many teachers noted that unique opportunities for students were created through the teaching artists' instructional strategies and skills that were different from their own.

**Teacher 6:** It really reached out and hit a chord with a few of the kids that aren't just happy learning about something through video clips or reading or different primary sources—the kinds of things that we do. I think the artists bring in talents and treasures that I don't have. I'm not singing with them. I'm not dancing with them. I'm not making [Underground Railroad] slave quilts. I just don't have that capacity or ability, or I'm not that talented. They get the background from me and I just felt like it hit a nerve with some of the kids or hit a chord with some of them. It's like, "Oh hey, yeah I do remember [the teacher] talking about this." and "Oh, I get it now." It was able—for some of the kids, really—to make connections and get them more interested. It's better to have other people come in with these talents and share in a different way and just hit the same material that they've had, but hit it in a different way. I mean hit it through the arts where the kids can really, really connect. And I think they did. They were dancing—I couldn't believe in one period of dancing, the African dance, how well the artist came in and had those kids choreographed from the beginning [and] had a whole routine in one 40-minute period. And they all participated in it and got a lot out of it.

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**Teacher 18:** You can't reach students, every student, in the exact same way. So this adds some diversity and opened up the possibilities that maybe students that can't be reached by me or my teammate can be reached by this person or can be enlightened by this person that's coming in.

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**Teacher 13:** I think even the year that we made the digeridoo and they performed... There were kids who embraced it, the music part of it, that were not the [usual] kids who were the top in the class and I sometimes feel, like with my experience with [a specific student] and some of the other kids, it hits those quiet kids sometimes that don't do as well in a regular class. I think it might be because of the enrichment and [the fact that] it's not graded. So, because it's not graded, they're more free to try things and it's okay if it takes a while or they're not great at it. It's the low-keyness of the artists and the things that they bring that makes it just very enriching for the kids.

The artists narrated different criteria for success than that frequently encountered in the regular school program. Attention was centered on students' ability to self-express and adequately communicate their ideas; the units of measurement were conceptualization and voice. Courage

to commit thought to action and the extent to which students participated in the artistic process were the measures of success.

Artists and teachers described taking on different roles in the classroom; artists tended to be more focused on facilitating the creative process and artistic production within a highly malleable and individualized framework for achievement.

**Teaching Artist 5:** The teacher is working as a teacher where she's more, if it was like a degree, she'd be the Bachelor of Science and I'm the BFA. So, I'm like, "Everything is beautiful, everything is great." And she's like, "Oh, this is a little—this isn't spelled right or maybe you want this here." And I think that's helpful for the students, too.

Teaching artist and teacher narrations mirrored the findings of a previous study by Rabkin, Reynolds, Hedberg, and Shelby (2011), in which teaching artists were less "rule bound" than teachers in arts-integrated workshops, and artists that were interviewed described learning the rules of their artistic disciplines so they could break them in creative ways (p. 52). In the present study, teachers generally narrated that their roles with students were different, in part, because they were required to have students achieve clear benchmarks and standards, so they were focused on helping students achieve those standards.

**Teacher 13:** The whole thing was more relaxed. I don't know if it's our...maybe it is our nerves, our nerves of wanting our children to do better. I don't know...you're making me think that maybe the end result—we're getting glitches along the way that the artists don't have. They come and they're hoping to be successful and they create something or do something with a group of children, and if everyone had a good time and seemed to do a little better, then it [was] good.

Because the units of measurement were based on such internal elements in the arts-integrated programs, both students and teachers experienced less pressure to produce a specific externally sanctioned outcome. The end point of the artistic process tended to be self-defined as there was little pressure of a grade or a test score assigned to the final outcome.

Artistic practice often entails an iterative process; across disciplines, giving form to ideas requires repetition and reworking. Artists may expect mistakes to be made as a natural consequence of the creative process, so the ‘glitches’ may be viewed differently. While students often produced artwork or created performances in YA programs, these outcomes were less constrained by assessment and allowed for student experimentation. Teaching artists frequently approached student learning as a process of inquiry where more attention was placed on process than product. Conforming to a strict model was not a narrated goal of YA workshop sessions.

**Teaching Artist 1:** If [the students] have to critique, it needs to be a positive critique, because in the end none of [the students] have performed this perfectly. And even with me, I always reassure them, even when I go into different school situations, I’m never perfect. There’s always something in that environment that catches me off guard, that causes me to fumble. So, it’s okay. We’re going to fumble, it’s okay.

Instructional approaches of teaching artists implementing YA programs generally contributed to an environment conducive to the development of student voice, self-efficacy, and engagement.

In the following sections, I first describe the environment promoted by teaching artists during YA arts programming before describing the behaviors associated with that environment.

### **Activating Context Change**

YA arts integrated programs provided a change of context for teachers to develop new perspectives on their roles as educators and to adopt different strategies for meeting the requirements of a high-pressure, high-stakes assessment environment in a school with persistently low achieving status. The pressure of improving student performance placed on teachers in such a context is great, and it may in fact hinder their ability to provide the instruction necessary to support improvement. So much emphasis may be placed on the end result or the target goals that the process of achieving those goals is compromised.

Teachers discussed changes in program scheduling and content area foci as a result of low measured student achievement. Content area foci were shaped by testing concerns, and time spent on arts activities was reduced for many students. Generally, teachers narrated that they had limited control over the content they needed to cover during class, but more autonomy was described in the methods selected to deliver that content. A few interviewed teachers described how they incorporated new instructional strategies and activities as a result of involvement with YA programs. Teaching artists often introduced teachers to new arts-integrated methods of content delivery that engaged students.

**Teacher 6:** ...So, you have to make decisions. Do I really want the kids to learn and embrace and remember and be changed or grow or do I want to drill them and kill them with the facts? And you just hope that with all these experiences that we give them, they'll be able to answer some questions on a multiple choice test. But ,it's the issue in education right now. Are we creating students that are thinking and that are emotional and are empathetic and caring and make connections to history and the present day? Or, are we making students that can just memorize and do well on a test, but can't function outside of the classroom? And teachers every day have to make daily decisions—what are we going to do? What kind of experiences are we going to give our kids? And that's where programs like this really are helpful, especially for a lot of the teachers who are so under the gun with their jobs or these test scores. It's good for them to have a program, even just for a week, to have kids have this experience and then see the success and then try to bring that success and translate it into their own classrooms and say, "Yeah, I can do something similar like that. I don't have to just give them notes on this. We can have a similar experience. I'm not an artist, but I can do something similar where I know the kids are going to connect to it. Or, I can have them read out of the book and take notes and they won't ever remember it or be better for it."

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**DGT:** How is your role as a teacher affected by the presence of YA programming in the curriculum?

**Teacher 10:** You know something? I feel strongly the children learn through the song, learn from the movement [in the YA workshop]. The kindergarten is an extremely academic program where all this stuff is cut out and gone. They get music once every six days, art once every six days, and otherwise it's a real academic program besides the crafts that I do in the classroom. So, [the students] look forward to the artists coming into the room. They love to perform. They love to sing. And putting on the end of the year presentation production, they're thrilled to get up and sing their songs and do that. And the artists I've worked with—there have been two different [artists], main [artists], singing—and they have a wonderful, I think, relationship with the kids. They're gentle and it's a nice kind of program.

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**DGT:** And is it also, are [the artists] also asking for [something different from the students] or is it the same [as what teachers ask for]?

**Teacher 13:** I think they might be asking things differently because we are told and we're dictated by what we're supposed to do. And I think there are Common Core goals, but they don't have to be measured for them. They can come in and explore and be creative, and then there is no test, you know? There is no test and so in the end, in the long run, you hope there's improvement in their skills, in their creativity or something, but there is no test to see if there really is or not. Maybe [the students' success is due to] not having the pressure of having the test? Maybe it makes it a more lighthearted enrichment experience.

Enjoyment of the learning process can be lost by both teachers and students under the constant pressure to achieve specific outcomes within a highly structured timeline, but the high level of student engagement in YA programs may provide a change of perspective. Teachers who struggle with the requirements of a highly competitive environment may be inspired to apply similar arts integration strategies in their own classrooms. Teachers are also able to see students succeed in YA programs, which often stands in contrast to the results of state assessments for a persistently low achieving school, and the approach of the teaching artists may provide a model for alleviating negative effects of performance-based instruction.

In YA workshops, teachers may see students who regularly perform poorly on assessments succeed in a new context. Arts integrated programs provide students with an opportunity to excel through the creative process. Since prerequisite knowledge was not a condition of participation and success was predicated on self-expression, students' past records of achievement had less influence on their growth trajectories in the YA program context. Essentially, academic tracking, which has been documented as having various negative effects on student progress, particularly for low-SES and minority populations (Gamoran, 1992; Hallinan, 1992; Lucas, 2001), had little influence on student success in YA workshops. Moreover, teaching artists enter the classroom without knowledge of top performers or

struggling students, so have little opportunity to form expectations of student behavior based on previous record.

**Teacher 5:** I think if you asked everybody in class who are the top five kids in the classroom academically, probably almost every kid would mention the same five kids. So, we all know who the top people are. And a lot of that might come from me: “Wow, Leila did her homework again. Oh wow, look Leila got a hundred again. Oh, Leila, Leila, Leila.” So, just maybe hearing that. “Who is the number one student in the class?” “Leila.” “Why?” “I don’t know.” Well, probably because they hear her name all the time [because of my] praising, and I think what this program does is it gives them a clean slate—and especially something like, “Oh, I like to draw, I like to color, I like to— Oh, I don’t have to read a real lot, I don’t have to write a real lot, I’ll be able to do something different?” ...I think it brings everybody up a little bit to where, yeah, you’re not Leila yet, but you’re better than what you were because now it’s an equal field that you’re on. You didn’t need how well you did in second grade or how well you did in first grade or how long you’ve been living in the country. It’s just basically, “Wow, this is something new. All you want me to do is do this and express myself? Well, I think I can do that.” So, yeah, I think the competition becomes a lot less and I think that everybody gets an opportunity to look at the different things that even the kids that hardly did any homework or any work for me all year were actually doing. People got an opportunity to just appreciate: “Oh wow, I thought the kid was non-productive and hardly did anything and didn’t hand stuff in and now all of a sudden his work actually looks pretty good.”

Watching students do well in the workshops may allow teachers to see different dimensions of a child’s potential, and students may also be able to see new aspects of their identities or abilities as they try on different roles in a new context. Through creative practice, students were able to show their knowledge in expressive ways; YA workshops provided uniquely artistic avenues for displaying mastery of content.

Teaching artists and teachers often met before workshops to connect arts-integrated programs with the Common Core Standards and curricula in other academic subjects. Students who were not proficient showing their knowledge in the regular school program were provided opportunities to communicate their understanding through arts-integrated activities.

**DGT:** What opportunities do students have to learn about themselves through YA arts programs?

**Teacher 3:** I think some of the students were able to see that they could maybe act something out versus give us a written explanation of something...I said to a couple of

them, “I hope that later on in your education that you are in a play or you do something with the arts because you’re very good at it.” I don’t think some of those kids knew that until they had the opportunity in a small [space]—you know, we have 28 kids—versus in the whole theater. They had the opportunity to try and take part in something because we don’t have a lot of plays in our everyday reading program. There’s, I think, two that we do throughout the whole entire year where they can actually act something out. I was very shocked to see that [some of the kids] could act something out or demonstrate in a different way than I would normally ask them. I think some of their self-esteem definitely increased because some of the kids that don’t normally participate really wanted to [participate] a lot more than they would have if it was, “Okay, let’s write about what you think the chapter is about.” Because some of them are just at that level; they can’t do that. So it was a different opportunity for them to express what they’ve learned.

Similar to previous research on teaching artist workshops, teachers narrated surprise at the capabilities students displayed through arts involvement (Rabkin et al., 2011). For students who did not frequently excel in core subjects, the change of context that YA programs provided may have revealed abilities students were not aware they possessed. Additionally, as teachers learn more about their students’ potential, they may find ways of incorporating the instructional strategies of the teaching artists into their own programs to help their students succeed.

Teaching artists come into the classroom without prior knowledge of a student’s behavior. As a result, they may be more lenient towards students who are disruptive in the classroom on a regular basis. Teachers, in contrast, have more time and experience with students in which to form judgements of a student’s character. If a student repeatedly challenges the teacher and interrupts instruction, that teacher may be less inclined to call on the student during class or provide fewer opportunities for the student to ameliorate past mistakes. When teaching artists went into the school to teach YA workshops, teachers typically took on a secondary role as co-teachers or support teachers while the teaching artists implemented programming. Teachers could act as distanced observers who were able to step outside of their roles as educators and view students from a different perspective.

**Teacher 5:** I like the energy that [the teaching artist] used. She's really good with the kids. She's very positive. Sometimes as the classroom teacher we know our students very, very well and, as we know, sometimes the kids can challenge us. So, we might have a biased opinion of the kids and we might not give them opportunity. We might think of it as being shouting out—"Oh, be quiet, zip it, I don't want to hear it."—because we're so used to that. But yet, when you have somebody else coming that doesn't know the students and treats them all equally, and again it's almost like giving them a clean field, an even field to be playing on, all of a sudden the kids that normally might not get an opportunity to give their input are now giving that input. A lot of times it would make me feel like, "Wow, that's excellent." And it would almost encourage me to say, "Hey, look, maybe that kid is not just a kid that gets out of his seat and blabs his mouth and tries to cause—maybe he does have more to it, so why don't you give him a little bit more of an opportunity." So it gives me a chance to be looking outside in on a situation. And instead of being so worried about maintaining class order, it gives me an opportunity to see the better in people...Somebody else [can come in] for 45 minutes, be encouraging, lift up some people and then just be able to leave and [come back] the next time. That makes those kids want to come back, and when she comes back again they feel really successful.

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**Teacher 13:** We were talking about how [the teaching artist] is so inspirational...If [the students] don't follow his directions or they hit a wall when they're doing programming, [the teaching artist would say], "Well, you know what? You're not doing what you're directed to do," and he has a more positive way of dealing with the kids that [is sometimes] a fresh approach, a fresh approach to teaching with just a rapport with the kids because we're with them all the time. Just listening to him talk to the kids—especially sixth graders because sixth graders are so temperamental—it's just more you can gain. Personally, you can gain from it. It's like, "Oh you know what? I could've said it that way too." Instead of like, "Oh my goodness, you're not following directions again." He's like, "Well, you hit a wall there. To go beyond this you've got to make lots of mistakes here. You've got to take care of it; you've got to try again." [It was] just a more positive way as opposed to sometimes stating the obvious. "Here we go again. You're not doing your best." It [sounded] different when it came out of his mouth than, you know, "You're not doing your best again." Because he doesn't know, so it's kind of a fresh approach. Even with kids that come with difficulties—very encouraging, kind of inspiring, trying something new and the kids just seemed to like it. So, it's good to see someone do things differently.

Workshops allowed teachers to see interactions occur between students and teaching artists with less pressure from classroom management and achievement benchmarks. Changing the highly competitive context of learning enabled teachers to watch their students behave differently and gave students a chance to show different aspects of themselves. Teachers could be inspired to give students new and different opportunities to excel and prove mastery of content.

YA programs also enabled students to see one another in a new context and to take on different roles with their peers. Teachers observed that YA programs provided a venue for students to showcase the talents and abilities that were not tapped into during regular non-arts programs. In many cases, students were able to show off their strengths. For example, students who struggled with reading or writing and frequently needed assistance could step into new roles where they became the students who assisted their peers.

**Teacher 6:** Some of the kids dance like I would never dance in class, but to see some of the girls that really love to dance and take dance, how quickly they picked up those steps. I don't know, I just think they really had an opportunity to shine in front of their classmates when they struggle in writing and maybe the journal process was a little bit more difficult for them...But when it came time to do the dancing or the music, they really could be the star of the show in class for once. So that was a real opportunity for a lot of the kids.

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**DGT:** So students who may in another context, in other subjects throughout the school day, may not have or be in the same role, took on a different role?

**Teacher 6:** Right, well they struggle in class—the reading and the writing is difficult. That's what we're always working on—trying to improve our reading and writing skills. So, it's not like they didn't read and write with the Underground Railroad [YA program]—they did with this program. They had to write. That was difficult for them just like any writing piece...But, they had an opportunity to use their strengths with the singing and the dancing—some areas that they are really good at. They don't have the opportunity to utilize [those strengths] in Social Studies class. I didn't even know the kids could dance as well as they did. I think it makes them feel good to get up in front of their classmates and show off where some of the other kids were not coordinated—you know, struggling with some of the dance steps at first. The other kids could help them along and say, “Hey, I've got this.” And it's just nice to be able to be successful in something in front of your classmates, especially with peer pressure. You don't always want to be the kid in class that is struggling or doesn't know the answer or gets the lowest grade on the writing assignment. It feels good to give them an experience that they can be successful in, that they can show off what they're really good at because they all have talents and I guess reading—a lot of them struggle with that. They don't read enough or they just don't have the vocabulary to deal with a lot of the work that is put in front of them at school.

During both individual and focus group interviews, teachers noted that students who usually struggled in the traditional curriculum often did well in YA programs, which frequently altered previously existing peer relationships. For illustration, in the following interview excerpt, a male

sixth grade student narrates how his relationship to ELL students shifted during the STEAM arts and technology workshop.

**DGT:** Did you feel like you succeeded in those programs?

**Grade 6 Student 22:** There's really no way to—if there's no right or wrong answer, how can you succeed? How can you fail?

**DGT:** Oh, alright, that's interesting. When you interact with other students and there's no success or failure let's say, is that different?

**Grade 6 Student 22:** Yeah.

**DGT:** How?

**Grade 6 Student 22:** Because when other students fail—[pause] some students, like in my class, a lot of times a lot of the students fail, but that's because my class, most of them are ESL—

**DGT:** So, English is a second language.

**Grade 6 Student 22:** Yeah, for a lot of them.

**DGT:** So in these programs—does it change how you connect or talk to your friends or interact with your peers when you're in programs like this where there is no right answer? Or, do you interact similarly as your regular classes?

**Grade 6 Student 22:** Similarly.

**DGT:** But you see that in the other classes the ESL students fail and in these programs they don't.

**Grade 6 Student 22:** Some of them succeed, like I taught a couple of students [some] things and I know that the ESL teachers help and they do a lot. But in the first year that they come and they don't speak any English, I try to help them more than the ESL teachers because I have them more [in my classes] than [the ESL teachers]. Sometimes the ESL teachers don't have classes for them until the end of the day—like sometimes they just don't have classes for them—it depends on what letter day it is sometimes.

**DGT:** How do you help the ESL students?

**Grade 6 Student 22:** Well, whenever a new ESL student comes I try and kind of like teach them English a little bit.

**DGT:** Is it the same? Do you do the same thing in these programs versus regular classes?

**Grade 6 Student 22:** I really don't have to.

**DGT:** You don't have to.

**Grade 6 Student 22:** It seems like they get it more.

**DGT:** Oh, as time goes on?

**Grade 6 Student 22:** Yeah.

**DGT:** In these programs? It's different or the same?

**Grade 6 Student 22:** It's kind of different. I don't know how or why. They understand it a little bit better.

**DGT:** In these programs.

**Student 22:** Yeah.

**DGT:** In the arts programs, like the tech program.

**Student 22:** Yup. Because my friend just came here a couple of years ago, like maybe last year. He didn't really understand English at all and then I started teaching him a little

bit. This year he understood a lot of English, but he couldn't really type English and when [the teaching artist] came, he helped him.

In the above student's narration, his relationship to the ELL student was altered because he did not have to assist his peer in accomplishing the assignment, a role he usually took on during the regular school day. Instead, the ELL student was able to accomplish the task with the assistance of the teaching artist. As the student above observed, ELL students tended to not require his help learning and understanding English during YA programs. A female seventh grade student narrated a similar situation when she compared her experiences in English Language Arts and the YA creative writing workshop.

**DGT:** How did you work with other students [in the YA creative writing workshop]?

**Grade 7 Student 52:** I worked very well with other students because I really like to see what they wrote. Because we're like, "Oh, what did you write?", and we both looked at each other's papers and we're like, "Wow, this class has really changed us all because before that, our writing wasn't really up to par, but now it's really outstanding." I've seen how people write because a lot of people would say [about another student], "Oh my god, that kid is so stupid." But when he has to write some paper, he's brilliant in some ways.

**DGT:** So going to the comment that you just made, [that] there's a student who didn't do well in other classes, but did well with the stories. Students had an opinion of one student and it changed?

**Grade 7 Student 52:** I mean that's how we perceived it as because there is a student in my class who really does not care about English [class]. He's like, "Oh, I'm already failing, so why bother? Why bother doing anything else?" And I was like, "Uh, you can actually write a good story." Because he has pretty, pretty good ideas and we were, a lot of people were shocked because we did this benchmark test to see if we are reading above a ninth grade level and he was one of them. So it's like, wow, people were so surprised as to how he got that good of a grade because he needed to have less than six wrong on the test and there were like 56 questions. So he did really, really well. I mean, I really didn't see his story, but I think if I did and he did put some emotion to it, I would've really loved it and been compelled to it.

**DGT:** Was English his first language?

**Grade 7 Student 52:** Yeah, he was born here.

In the above section, the student noted how her perceptions of both her own writing and that of her peers became more positive during the YA creative writing workshop. Later in the

interview, she described how her view of one student with special needs also shifted after he read his story in front of the class during the same workshop.

**DGT:** With what was done, meaning just a few students sharing their stories, did you feel like you got anything out of that?

**Grade 7 Student 52:** I did get something out of that because I was so surprised. And I mean no offense to the kid, it was another boy and he read his story and it was so good. It was about a sailor. It was like, “Oh, he had such a good story.” And the cool part of it was that he was in the Special Ed class. I was like, wow, he really had such a cool story. He doesn’t even need to be in Special Ed at all since he really had such good dialogue and he had a really good reason to draw in the reader because all [of us] were...looking at him. It was cool. It was a good story.

When students were exposed to their peers in the context of arts integrated programs, they were provided with opportunities to interact with one another in new ways. They often had the opportunity to learn more about both themselves and their peers. The interactions that were narrated by students and teachers appeared to contribute to the social cohesion of the school because students made new social connections to other students. When students see themselves and their peers succeed, they may grow to appreciate the strengths each student brings to the school community and provide positive support to one another that extends beyond the workshop session.

It should be noted that previous research on bullying in schools revealed that the presence of pronounced social hierarchies in the school setting was associated with greater stability of the victim role in the bullying scenario; in other words, students who experienced victimization were more likely to be consistently bullied in a social context characterized by a high level of social hierarchy (Schäfer et al., 2005). School contexts with less pronounced social hierarchies provided students with greater opportunity “to escape from unfavorable relationships” (Schäfer et al., 2005, p. 332). The social relationships encouraged in YA arts programs were generally described as egalitarian by all stakeholder groups (students, teachers, teaching artists, and

administrators). In describing their observations, teaching artists explained that students had opportunities to relate to peers because they shared new experiences where they were positioned as equals in their knowledge levels. This is particularly important when viewed in the context of a diverse student body with a sizable percentage of multilingual students and ELLs. The gaps in English proficiency and limits to communication among newcomer students and their U.S. born peers can be great and may impose barriers on the social cohesion of the school community. But YA workshops often flattened the academic and social hierarchies that were present in the school environment and allowed diverse groups of students to make connections through arts integrated learning experiences. As I describe further in a later section, communication among students of varying levels of English proficiency was supported via the alternative avenues of communication afforded by artistic practice and expression.

**DGT:** So some of these students aren't necessarily friends?

**Teaching Artist 1:** I wouldn't say they're not friends. They probably just don't socialize as much. Just because you're in the same class doesn't mean you're necessarily friends. It just means I'm in a class with you together. But I think when you're put into a situation that's quite similar across the board, you realize that, "Wow, you know, I didn't even realize they were going through the same thing." You don't feel by yourself, you know what I mean? Especially during that—that's always a very challenging stage of life when you're in school, like junior high school, because of the peer pressure and everything. So you've got people coming in, "Oh, she don't know how to dance! He don't know how to dance." "Well, none of you have ever had to dance before, so this makes it fair across the board because none of you have ever done this dance from Africa. So that's what makes it fair, totally straight, and totally no screwing up. Who's the best?" Because none of them had ever experienced that before, so I can't go in and go, "Oh, well, she has done this before." No, no, this is across the board.

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**Teaching Artist 2:** You know, there's always that huge barrier that's like, "Okay they're way up here and I'm somewhere else." I think putting them in that [workshop] environment, taking their guard down, putting them in an environment of play, of creativity, of looking at technology, of competing in a friendly way creates an environment where it's not so much student-principal-teacher. It's just people having fun and learning, and that's the quality right there where students can see that and have a visual connection with what it's like to put everybody on the same level and, I think, have a shared experience where it's not so much about where you are, who you are, what your title is or anything other than the fact that we're all doing this together.

Teaching artists were explicit in their desire to provide an equitable learning environment for students, and they accomplished this by addressing students equally and organizing student interaction in such a way that all students were encouraged to work with one another. The excerpt below is taken from an interview with a teaching artist who implemented a creative writing workshop with seventh grade students.

**Teaching Artist 6:** I don't know if, when I come into a class, if there are factions, factions I should say, of groups. I'm not ever aware of that when I walk into a classroom because one of the things that I'm really big on is putting everyone on an equal level almost immediately.

**DGT:** How?

**Teaching Artist 6:** Part of it is through the initial theater game. Part of it is simply how I address and treat everybody. I call it active non-judgment, which is—I guess I need to come up with a better way of describing it. But it's being really aware of how everybody is in the classroom, like individually how everybody is in the classroom.

Field notes of another teaching artist's actions and dialogue with students during a creative workshop session with third graders showed how she organized group activities to include all students' voices and ideas. In the activity described below, students were working collaboratively in groups to create their own stories.

**Teaching Artist 9:** Guys you're not listening in that group at all. What's the first thing you should be doing?

**Students:** The problem.

...

**Teaching Artist 9:** Do you have an idea for a problem?

[A student provides his idea.]

[The teaching artist gives a suggestion for the problem.]

**Teaching Artist 9:** So she has one problem. Let's hear hers [another student's problem]. We have a place. Any other ideas?

[TA offers examples of problems. She restates students' problems for the storyline. Other students listen as one group member offers her problem.]

**Student:** We have three problems. [Student describes the problems.]

**Teaching Artist 9:** So, these three problems. Another one?

[Student provides her problem.]

**Teaching Artist 9:** So, what's the main problem? Because what you're saying is really good.

...

**Teaching Artist 9:** Sometimes a lot of ideas are going at once. Sometimes I feel like this [hand gesture around face] where everyone is talking and I don't get to get my ideas across. So why don't we ask him?

...

*The TA gets close to one student who was not really participating and redirects the entire group to hear his ideas. She asks him, "What if there was a war guy? We really want you to be part of the process because they know that you have so much to say."*

*A student responds: "We have a lot of faith in you." Another student gets close to him. The student who is not participating is shielding his eyes. Another student says, "Think of something so-so..." The student is covering his face and having a hard time sharing. The other students in his group are trying to coax input out of him.*

...

**Teaching Artist 9:** All right, everyone. If you can hear me, clap once. If you can hear me, clap twice. Everyone pay attention here.

[Students quiet down.]

**Teaching Artist 9:** Now we have been working together maybe 10 minutes so far. Is it challenging? Some of us have different ideas. We have to work together. We have some issues. We have to work through these issues. Excuse me. Pay attention, okay? You can combine the story, okay? Now we have to really get through this and write down the problem.

...

**Teaching Artist 9:** All right, let's get group number one to come up. Everyone, they're our presenters. So what do we do?

[Students clap.]

**Teaching Artist 9:** On the count of three.

**Students:** Hurrah!

**Teaching Artist 9:** The whole group should come together. You should have someone speaking for your group. You want to stand nice and confident behind her and make sure you're supporting her. Everyone should be nice and quiet so you can hear the presenters and you should introduce your group.

[Students are quiet.]

As shown above, the teaching artist consistently reinforced the importance of hearing and respecting all students' responses, feedback, and presentations. Other instructional strategies teaching artists narrated in interviews included deliberately placing students into new social configurations, breaking up existing student groups and creating new connections. For example, one teaching artist explained how he addressed multilingual and ELL students' inclination to group together by shared language during a music-based workshop. He would carefully break the language groups apart and regroup students so they were forced to leave the comfort of their

first language to communicate with each other, meanwhile taking great caution in respecting students' cultural histories and traditions.

**DGT:** [For students with the highest level of proficiency in English in any given language group], they become the interpreter in a sense?

**Teaching Artist 7:** To each other, yes. And then you have the same thing over here, the same thing over here, and the same thing over here. [Gestures toward different areas of the room.] So I make it a point to not only include them, but sometimes separate them—take them and put them in a different comfort zone and now it forces the issue of communication. So what it does—

**DGT:** What do you mean by include?

**Teaching Artist 7:** I'll take the students that are hanging together and I'll separate them.

**DGT:** Ah.

**Teaching Artist 7:** Right, I do. And sometimes I'll take that and go hmm, okay. And I'll put you in this group, you in this group, you in this group, and you in this group.

**DGT:** And now they're not necessarily with students who speak the same language.

**Teaching Artist 7:** Exactly.

**DGT:** How do they deal with that?

**Teaching 7:** Well, that's part of it. Now I'll go to group one and I'll say what I'm going to say about the[workshop] and you have one and they're trying to understand, so now the one that speaks Spanish is now speaking to the one that speaks Burmese and the one that speaks Burmese is with the one that speaks [another language]. And then you have the one that speaks English. Okay. So they already understand who doesn't know what. They already know. So they put more patience into what they're doing. And they know to speak slower in what they're doing. And then, the language is not the real issue, [speaking more slowly] the language is not the real issue. I have to be careful in this: understanding the different countries. So you take a young lady who is Burmese who is going to be a little uncomfortable if there is a male in the group.

**DGT:** There are also tribal issues.

**Teacher 7:** Yeah, so I recognize these things. So, the language is not the issue. The language is the easy part. It's having awareness of presence of what you just said. So my experience gives me that. When I separate, I'm also thinking about that as well. So when I do my separations I go, okay, I'm going to take this one and this one and put you in this group and this group because there's not going to be males in that group. Now they're more comfortable because they don't have to go home and try to explain this. And it works.

By pulling students out of their respective comfort zones in safe ways, the culturally sensitive teaching artist above was able to prompt students into situations where they needed to rely on each other for assistance. Collaborative learning experiences were often initiated when students were provided with a problem to solve with a team of classmates. In discussion of group

activities, another YA teaching artist explained that students were required to work collaboratively to create a performance in her dance workshop, a process that initiated new social relationships among students.

**Teaching Artist 1:** ...There's one thing about when I do my sessions. I don't always just provide the answers. I set up scenarios where, "Okay, you have to resolve this situation." So I would actually create partners and I would say, "Okay, now you're going to do the dance facing each other." A lot of times when you do something in one way and you all of a sudden change the environment, it will throw you. So, when I would actually have them facing each other or turn opposite you'd be surprised how students were like, "Okay, hold up." It just totally threw them off because they were no longer facing the front, facing me, where I was providing little hints. So now it's them having to work with their partner. And there were kids in the room in that scenario that weren't even really talking to each other. When I noticed that, I was like, "Did you all use to talk before?" "No, no, I never used to, I used to just go hi, you know, but now that we have to actually work together..." New friendships were created, and I think they also learned that, "Hey, when a problem comes, I don't always have to run to the adult, I can actually solve this problem myself." And who would have ever thought through a moment of song and dance from Africa that this would help stimulate that.

When learning contexts position students to work collaboratively, new social configurations among students may form. These new social configurations tend to break down existent social and academic hierarchies and help create a safe school environment where activities like bullying are less likely to occur. As students take on new roles in the context of YA programs, they may develop new perspectives on their identities and capabilities in the broader school context. Particularly for students who struggle on a daily basis, peer assistance through collaborative group work on arts-integrated tasks may lead to new opportunities for social and academic development. The strategies described above cumulatively contribute to a context change for both teachers and students that leads to new perspectives on student abilities and potential, helps to promote a supportive school community, and contributes to social cohesion among diverse groups of stakeholders, which may have an impact on student growth in the non-arts integrated school program.

### **Formative Assessment in YA Programs**

The learning environment is also influenced by Young Audiences' presence in the school because assessment in arts integrated programs is distinctly different from assessment in the regular school program. In the school environment, the very public nature of academic competition puts students' performance on display in front of their peers and teachers. As indicated by statements from teachers and students in the interview excerpts above, students are often aware of the academic hierarchies in their classrooms. They often know which students are performing well and which students are performing poorly. Alternatively, teaching artists in YA programs do not evaluate student proficiencies in the same manner as even the Art and Music classes at the school because the programs do not use performance-based assessment, which may work to promote competition among students in the school environment.

**Principal:** ... We have several components of arts programming, we have our courses in music and art, we have our various performance courses—bands, drum ensemble, guitar ensemble, recorder ensemble, and although you don't have to be proficient to start them, they are performance based; you're either learning your instrument or you're not. Some kids are more game to playing the guitar when they don't know what they're doing, but the Young Audiences program does fill a role of not being performance based and involving every kid in activities that are cognitively challenging, but also creatively challenging. In this world of standards—one of the reasons why I think a lot of schools don't do things like Young Audiences is [because] on face it looks like there's a standardized testing world of this skill, this standard. You start at the beginning and you give a pre-test, you give a post-test, you measure, and it's very data driven—you either master it or you don't master it. And if you don't master it, you get retaught, you get put in a different course. That's what we have to do to fulfill the mandate we've been given, but students don't thrive off of that kind of incessant competition.

Assessment in YA workshops was based on student improvement, but not measured via performance. Rabkin et al. (2011) characterized assessment by teaching artists as “formative assessment” in their study of arts integrated programs in Chicago schools (p. 97). Formative assessment, in contrast to summative assessment that provides “evidence of student achievement” according to clearly articulated outcomes, is assessment used for forming

educational goals and designing instruction to promote student understanding (Black & William, 2009, p. 8). Formative assessment is focused primarily on student improvement and learner autonomy (Black & William, 2009). The evaluation strategies used by the teaching artists in YA workshops, like the strategies of teaching artists in Chicago public schools (Rabkin et al., 2011), fall within the purview of formative assessment.

Formative assessment was both reflective and supportive of the iterative nature of artistic production, which requires repetitive reworking through ideas. In the creative process, the concept of failure is nullified because each mistake (or unintended outcome) yields information that is useful for reconceptualizing an idea into form. Nearly every single student I interviewed described an absence of failure in YA workshops. For the few students that did experience failure, it was for one of two reasons: they either did not complete their project or they initially struggled with the project. However, the latter group of students who struggled with their projects described success as the final outcome, and failure as part of the learning process. When asked whether there were right or wrong answers in the workshops, many students stated there were none. Some of the students interviewed had difficulty applying such a binary description to evaluation in YA workshops. Wrong answers were never recorded or tallied and were described as steps to a final outcome. The few students who claimed right and wrong answers were a component of YA programs additionally explained that wrong answers were an opportunity to improve and try again.

**DGT:** ...But there are no right or wrong answers in this workshop? What do you think about that?

**Grade 3 Student 27:** Mmm, it is complicated.

**DGT:** What do you mean by that?

**Grade 3 Student 27:** It is a little confusing.

**DGT:** It's confusing when there's no right or wrong answer? Why is that?

**Grade 3 Student 27:** Because we have to think of some other stuff and if we don't know, we try again and [the teaching artist] just says, "Try again and you might get a right answer."

**DGT:** Oh, okay. So if you get a wrong answer that doesn't mean you stop? You just keep trying?

**Grade 3 Student 27:** Mm-hmm. [yes]

**DGT:** How does that make you feel?

**Grade 3 Student 27:** Great.

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**DGT:** Is there anything like success or failure in that program?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** No.

**DGT:** No success or failure. Were there right or wrong answers?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** No.

**DGT:** No right or wrong answers. What kind of answers were there?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** Like there were right answers, um, and then if you thought it was wrong you just have to change it and you start over.

**DGT:** Did you make mistakes? Is there such a thing as a mistake in that class?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** Yeah.

**DGT:** You can make mistakes.

**Grade 3 Student 57:** Yeah, you can.

**DGT:** What happens if you make a mistake in that class?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** She doesn't really collect them. If you make mistakes she just tells you and then you have to fix them.

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**DGT:** In terms of success and failure in these workshops...How would you describe those opportunities for success and failure? I call them opportunities because failure can be an opportunity to learn. So, what are those opportunities?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** Well, with the Young Audiences programs, you really don't fail. You just learn more and they try to help you succeed in school...they try to give you a whole different insight on people's lives and what would happen with the topic you're going over.

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**DGT:** Did you experience failure in that program?

**Grade 7 Student 25:** No.

**DGT:** Were there right and wrong answers in that program?

**Grade 7 Student 25:** No.

**DGT:** What were the answers like?

**Grade 7 Student 25:** I'm not really sure.

\*\*\*

**DGT:** ...Did you ever experience failure in this workshop?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** No, but it's like when you run out of ideas and you don't feel like your story is over. You have like a writer's block, I guess is what they call it. So yeah, because I didn't really get to finish my story but...

**DGT:** You didn't finish your story? Were you given time after the workshop to finish or no?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** Well, I could have, but I didn't.

**DGT:** Would you attribute that to writer's block then?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** [non-verbal yes]

Answers often did not fit into strict right and wrong categories because emphasis was placed on the validity of each student's ideas. Students were generally encouraged to listen to their peers' ideas and share their own ideas freely. They were also able to work together to create their projects and revise their ideas with input from other students, activities that are associated with a formative assessment framework (Black & William, 2009).

**DGT:** Because there are no right or wrong answers, is it just your own ideas?

**Grade 7 Student 25:** Uh-huh. [yes]

**D:** Yes, that's accurate?

**Grade 7 Student 25:** Uh-huh.

\*\*\*

**DTG:** ...So, when you have the questions that you were given in the class, were there right or wrong answers?

**Grade 3 Student 59:** No, every answer is right.

**DTG:** Is every answer different, like, from different students?

**Grade 3 Student 59:** Mmm-hmm. [yes]

**DTG:** Okay. And, if there is no right or wrong answer, what did the answer look like then?

**Grade 3 Student 59:** Um, it looks like everybody can share their ideas.

**DTG:** Oh okay, that's interesting. And, when students share their ideas, what do other students do or say?

**Grade 3 Student 59:** Listen and tell what they think about.

\*\*\*

**DGT:** How did you succeed in the writing workshop?

**Grade 7 Student 25:** Um...I succeeded by other people reading it, their own stories, like how they set it up. Like my setup and their setup might be different, but if theirs is better I can take their setup and use it in my own work, too.

**DGT:** So you can take their setup and use it in your own work?

**Grade 7 Student 25:** Mm-hmm.

Teachers' observations mirrored the narrations of students; many teachers noted an absence of failure, or right and wrong answers. Instead, failure was defined as a student's refusal to engage in workshop activities, which did not often occur in YA programs. Conversely, in the regular school program, teachers noted failure as a factor that impacted students' progress. For ELL students in particular, the process of learning English in order to succeed in the academic

program was described as a struggle where failure could be a daily occurrence. Newcomer refugee students, frequently labeled as No Grade (NG) students due to limited knowledge of the English language or little to no prior formal education, were expected to eventually achieve the benchmarks associated with their grade levels. YA programs offered different pathways for these students to succeed when workshop goals centered on the articulation of student ideas and teaching artists used arts methods and practices to help all students express themselves.

**DGT:** Would you say that there is failure? That failure is an option in these programs?

**Teacher 3:** No, because if the some of the kids didn't act it out, she was right behind them saying, "Okay, well I'm going to take your hands and I'm going to act it out for you. I'm going to help you." So it wasn't really a right or wrong versus something else that we would normally do in the school setting. It was, you know, "What do you think the character is doing? Show me by your facial expression." And if they got what she thought wasn't correct, she might say, "Okay what is another possibility?" But nobody ever felt like, "Oh, I did this wrong." or "I feel dumb because I didn't get the—", it wasn't a right or wrong answer.

**DGT:** Would you say that then in contrast to the normal school day and academic subjects—that it's very different?

**Teacher 3:** Mm-hmm. [yes]

**DGT:** It is.

**Teacher 3:** Yes.

**DGT:** There is definitely failure.

**Teacher 3:** In the regular school day?

**DGT:** Yes.

**Teacher 3:** For some things. You know, whether it's math—sometimes there's only one answer for something. So, if they got it wrong, then they shut down. There wasn't really a right or wrong answer. I mean if it came to talking about one of the narrative elements—none of the kids really got the wrong [answer], I think, because they acted it out so much.

\*\*\*

**DGT:** How does the success and failure in this program compare to success and failure in the regular curriculum?

**Teacher 12:** Well, the students have benchmarks that they must achieve, so I mean we have a lot of students that, especially the ELL learners—I mean these kids are like sponges when they're here and they pick up really quickly, but unfortunately their first few years they struggle really badly with it. I have my module lessons that I give them. I have my quizzes that I give them and, yes, they do technically fail, but the newer students [are] also no grade students, so technically they're not failing, but in my eyes they're not achieving to standard.

**DGT:** No grade students meaning...?

**Teacher 12:** On their report cards we don't actually give them a grade, it's an NG.

**DGT:** Oh.

**Teacher 12:** So, because you have a child that has been in the country for a week, you can't just throw them into a 6th grade classroom. Obviously, they're failing—they would fail.

In describing how they measured success, teaching artists claimed that student engagement in the artistic process was the main goal. All of the artists were focused on providing a positive experience for students that enriched their understanding of culture, history, identity, and/or expression. None of the artists evaluated the students according to performance standards in their respective disciplines. Instead, artistic practice was used to help students learn content that connected to other core non-arts subjects through their own interests. Teaching artists noted that student improvement in various areas was a desired outcome and that improvement was predicated on internally defined benchmarks, namely self-expression (voice) and conceptualization of ideas into form. In evaluating whether students had improved during the course of arts-integrated activities, teaching artists frequently compared individual student actions at the beginning and at the end of the workshop. For example, students who had difficulty communicating to the group as a whole at the beginning of the workshop were deemed successful if their participation in group discussions increased by the end of the program.

**DGT:** So, are there activities that are based on succeeding or failing, or competition?

**Teaching Artist 1:** No. When we come in, it's not—I don't want to say it's anything about failure. Failure is not an option. It's just about trying...Just the fact that you came in and participated, that's an accomplishment. There are two different types of participation. There's active, then there's parallel. Parallel means you just stand there, but you're still on the floor. Active participation means you are actually going through the steps of what we're trying to accomplish...And the one thing I told everybody [was]: "My goal is not to make you a dancer. No, that's not my goal at all. My goal is to share something multicultural with you in regards to how culture, tradition is exchanged, how that culture has influenced who you are today whether you understand or not." And this also gives them a chance to draw similarities and comparisons in regards to where they're from. So, that's what it was, it was not about any type of failure. That was never even in the vocabulary.

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**DGT:** Is their progress in your program— is that connected to their academic progress in the sense [that] they are getting graded?

**Teaching Artist 2:** I don't realistically use grades. Because my metrics are not just from participation, what they are able to achieve, their ability to improve where they started to where they ended off, but I think it's an overall of those things—behaviors and really the teacher's impression.

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**Teaching Artist 5:** Success always looks like a kid saying I can't do this and then you come back five or ten minutes later and they have done it. That is success. Success is also a kid saying, "I don't know how to write a poem." And at the 30 minute mark when we're saying, "Who wants to share?" that kid raises their hand and they want to read. That's success and I get that and I'm always excited.

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**Teaching Artist 6:** So success for a lot of the kids [laughs]—for some of them it's just getting words down on paper, for some of them if we can get them to tell a story and understand and [have] it make sense from the beginning, from where they start to the end, that I would consider success. Most of them you look at in the long term. So, it's not really per day, but where did they start, that first workshop, to where did they end? Are they proud of their writing? I feel great success is when they're raising their hand to share their writing, when they're sitting down knowing that they created something that was new. We do a celebration at the very end and all the classes get together and select students share their writing. So, what I look for is I look for kids who don't normally get up to speak, kids who normally don't feel good about the writing that they've done or feel good about sharing anything in front of the class, and if we can get them up to speak when the whole class is together, then I feel like that's great success.

Approaches to evaluation narrated by teaching artists were indicative of formative assessment techniques such as peer and self-assessment and the use of open-ended questions when providing feedback to students (Black, 2009). Student growth tended to be described as self-regulated because growth was not structured with similar predetermined starting and ending points for each student. Students were able to build off of what they knew and learn at their own pace. Without the pressure of predetermined outcomes linked to summative assessments, students were provided with more freedom to take risks in their work, and they were encouraged to use this freedom for academic improvement and skill development.

For the teaching artists interviewed, mistakes did not lead to the completion of an attempt or the end of engagement with an activity. Mistakes in the YA workshop context were a

necessary component of the learning process and generally viewed as opportunities for improvement. Mistakes lead to the reconceptualization of an idea, the clarification of intent, or a commitment to artistic interpretation. Some of the artists refused to acknowledge the presence of mistakes or refused to use the term to describe any element of the learning process. They generally preferred to place emphasis on the students' ability to alter their performance or product at any moment. Consequently, student agency was supported because students were positioned as being in control of the final outcome.

**Teaching Artist 2:** ...One of the hardest things for them is to realize that it's okay to make mistakes. It's a part of the learning process. We expect you to make mistakes. And I think it's important for that process to be seen and for them to be comfortable with it. I don't think it's a realistic expectation for anybody to hold themselves to be right and perfect and green all the time. Sometimes we get red marks. Sometimes we miss something or make a mistake.

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**DGT:** So they might make a mistake, but it has to stay.

**Teaching Artist 3:** Yeah, and I discourage making—what I emphasize is it's not really a mistake. [If] you don't like it now, work it and make it do something else and build on what you have.

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**DGT:** In terms of going into the content and the students' participation, what are the opportunities for success or failure available to students through the particular workshops that you implement? [pause] Is there anything that looks like success or failure? It may or may not exist.

**Teaching Artist 5:** I don't use the word failure. [laughs] But I tell all the students that they can't [fail] because kids are always worried about: "I don't know how to rhyme, I can't write a poem." Or, "I never wrote a letter, all I do is write text." And I say, "Well, you can't make a mistake in my class."

For students with anxieties about failure, assessment may pose a threat to their participation in arts-integrated projects. Teaching artists discouraged disengagement from activities by emphasizing that evaluation was not predicated on measured outcomes. The artists simply reiterated that failure was lack of participation, and their instructional strategies worked to promote persistence in students. When interviewed, many students narrated pride in their performance or completion of a project and attributed increased persistence and motivation to

YA workshops. In describing their experiences in the creative writing workshop, for example, many students defined success as the ability to complete their stories, and many were impressed with the length and quality of their work.

Many students who struggle academically fail on a regular basis in the high-stakes summative assessment context. As a result, students may have difficulty trusting their ability to succeed and disengage from learning to avoid negative experiences. But teaching artists build students' trust in themselves by providing students with a context that bears no record of failure. Students are additionally given the space to find their own pathways to success because no external judgement is placed on their actions in the rigid terms of summative assessment; essentially, all attempts are considered valid.

**DGT:** Does that situation that you encounter with success and failure, or the lack of failure in those workshops, does that translate at all to your other classes?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** Because you didn't fail in it, when you'd go back to normal classes and you'd get a bad grade, it's like, "Wow, that's horrible." But then you keep trying because you just learned about it and you just got really good [at it] with Young Audiences. So then you keep trying and it helps more and more and more.

**DGT:** So, would you say that the Young Audiences programs affected your persistence?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** Yes.

**DGT:** Okay, so do you think it has increased or decreased your persistence?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** Increased my persistence.

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**DGT:** Do you think it's a good thing that you never fail?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** Yes.

**DGT:** Why?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** Because when people fail, they tend to give up. When people don't fail they tend to want to go on and keep succeeding and not give up and they just want to keep trying.

**DGT:** Okay, you say 'they'. Now what about for you?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** For me, um [laughs], I have gotten very low grades and they make me just want to throw the paper away and just stop trying. When it comes to Young Audiences, they help you. They say, "Oh, it's a good idea. It's not wrong, it's right." And they help you with it. Even if you get a wrong answer, they still say, "That's close, you're getting there." So, it makes you want to keep trying. It's not like you're just going to give up and just stop what you're doing because you get a wrong answer. When you get an answer wrong, normally, for me, I would just get frustrated and get it over

with and guess most of the time. But with Young Audiences, it helps you want to keep striving for the correct answer.

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**DGT:** Did you experience success in the workshop?

**Grade 7 Student 52:** I did experience success because I loved my story. Because I really thought my story was going to be...because she said, “Oh, you can just write a paragraph.” And I was like, “Oh, a paragraph—that’s easy.” But then as soon as I wrote my story I just couldn’t stop writing. It became more than a page, it became a page and a half. So I thought that was my success, that I really persevered, that I didn’t really just say, “I’ll give up.” It was a pretty cool experience for me.

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**DGT:** Did you experience success in this workshop?

**Grade 7 Student 26:** Yeah.

**DGT:** Why?

**Grade 7 Student 26:** It was a fun program to work with.

**DGT:** Was there something you felt particularly successful at?

**Grade 7 Student 26:** That I got to write it. That I made my own thing and it was good.

In evaluating their own workshops, teaching artists explained that students usually participated in activities. Their own success was often measured by their ability to engage students in artistic practice. This may reflect the artists’ expectations to entertain and engage an audience, but it also may reflect the artists’ understanding of the effects of extensive practice on performance. Artists put several hours into cultivating their craft across disciplines; the arts involve hands-on and practice-based work. Performances are usually short in comparison to the hours necessary for rehearsal, and artistic products do not often bear evidence or documentation of the amount of time required to make them. Even if an artwork is created in one hour, the training required to develop the prerequisite artistic ability for creation may be as long as ten years or more. Essentially, the proportion of time spent on production to time spent on developing the skills necessary for production is often weighted toward development. Artists may be accustomed to investing long stretches of time into their work with delayed gratification of concrete outcomes. Accordingly, the teaching artists’ emphasis on engagement and participation in YA workshops

may mirror their own experiences in their respective disciplines and the value of practice in developing artistic skill.

**Teaching Artist 1:** I always tell everybody, “Listen, I’m not trying to make you all African dancers. I’m just trying to present a hands-on experience for you. So feel good about yourself because you gave, you put forth an effort.” That’s where the self-esteem comes in. “Feel good that you came in here, you started, and you finished. Feel good that you came in here and you just didn’t cop out and give up. You made steps, you came in with your friends, you stayed with the class. You got on the floor, you attempted, you started, you finished.” Those are major steps...you know, in life. And everybody doesn’t have that character in regards to starting and then finishing. That’s a goal that you have to obtain.

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**DGT:** It’s not a situation where it’s succeed or fail, is that what you mean?

**Teaching Artist 3:** No, not really. Yeah, it could be, if you don’t want to do it, if you say I’m not doing it, or I’m not going to try. Or, I don’t know how to create a pattern or I don’t know how to use the glue or I can’t cut or I’m tired. You know, you could [fail]. I didn’t have any of that. Everybody participated.

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**Teaching Artist 5:** You can’t do anything wrong unless you don’t do anything. If I say, “Just leave your papers and you know I’ll come pick them up.”[and] when I’m picking up a paper off a desk, it doesn’t have anything on it—that’s failure. But, I don’t get that much. If I have 100 students in a session, I will say I will get back—about 88, 89 kids will actually write.

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**DGT:** There’s no formal critique involved?

**Teaching Artist 8:** No, if you participate, you’re doing a good job.

**DGT:** Right, but in terms of failure and success—

**Teaching Artist 8:** I think if you don’t participate to some degree. But even if they’re standing there, if they don’t know the language, they’re listening. They’re watching. You know, sometimes someone will come up and point at a board- we’ll have a letter board and they’ll point. Maybe they can’t ask me but we figure out what they want to know. Failure would be if somebody just didn’t stand up and participate at all, and they always end up participating.

The value teaching artists placed on student participation in artistic practice informed their assessment methods, which in turn shaped their interactions with students in the classroom. Their approaches to instruction were influenced by their knowledge and experience as artists who brought techniques and practices of the arts into school contexts. These qualities may not have been commonly embedded within the structure of the school program and provided unique

assets and opportunities to the learning environment, such as formative assessment strategies that supported students' academic skill development. In the next sections, I discuss other instructional approaches used by the teaching artists in YA programs that are associated with artistic practice.

### **Conceptualization and Student Voice as Standards**

As Rabkin et al. (2011) discovered in Chicago public schools, teaching artists may “[internalize] additional standards...that go well beyond the content and skills outlined in the official standards” as they “spend their lives developing what many refer to as their ‘voice’” (p. 70). They found teaching artists evaluated students' work according to two main standards: meaning and voice. Meaning referred to students' ability to communicate ideas by demonstrating an understanding of the subjective, contextual, and literal connotations of signs and symbols and voice referred to self-expression. In the present study, I found teaching artists used similar standards to shape their instruction with students. I refer to these standards as conceptualization and voice, where conceptualization is slightly different from the ‘meaning’ standard provided by Rabkin et al. (2011). My use of conceptualization as a descriptor includes students' ability to give form and structure to ideas, which precedes communication. Conceptualization requires the development of technical skill in addition to an understanding of signs and symbols.

The standards of conceptualization and voice may be best described as internal benchmarks because they are different for each student and grow out of each student's individual development. These standards, or internal benchmarks, were supported by allowing students to exercise choice through artistic practice. Choice involved the selection of words, images,

movements, or other components relevant to art making from a broad range of options. Choice was facilitated by the freedom of experimentation that the formative assessment context allowed.

In discussion of a creative writing workshop, one teaching artist explained how choice promoted the development of students' stories. She used a line of questioning that pushed students toward a deeper analysis of their plotline's logic and their characters' actions. As opposed to stringing random events together, students were asked to make meaningful connections among narrative elements to communicate an intentional vision. Similarly, another teaching artist described a visual arts workshop in which she provided students with examples of quilts that used sewn patterns and symbols as coded messages related to the Underground Railroad period of U.S. history. She asked students to create their own coded messages using similar techniques without copying the examples shown.

**Teaching Artist 6:** There's really not much room for failure unless they simply do not participate. It's not really good choices or bad choices in creative writing. There are good choices and there are better choices and then there are choices that are really not so strong. For instance, if you're [writing that] you're on a boat and then all of a sudden an alien comes in and then all of a sudden somebody gives you 10 million dollars, you have to think about, "Well, that could happen, but is that realistic or is it true to the character? Is it true to what is actually happening in the story?" So, there's not really a failure like: "That's a terrible story! That's awful!" It's like, "Well, those really aren't the best choices. Or, if you really want to hold to those choices, how do we then make them work for the story that you plan to tell? Because this is really about creative writing." When they incorporate the scientific method [in the creative writing workshop], it comes to the same thing: "Is it true? Does this make sense? Does it seem like everything is lining up the way you want? If there's a piece that's not fitting, is it because of the whole thing or is it because of this little piece?" You start to analyze in a really direct way what's working and what's not in your writing.

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**Teaching Artist 3:** What I try to create is a possibility for students to be able to [understand] that women and men who make quilts still use these patterns. And then, you can make your own either using the triangles, the shapes, [and] the materials we have, which are very similar to some of the shapes that they see in these traditional quilts. I like to have something literal for [students] to just remember [the symbols]. So, [for example], if you want to try to create this bear's claw, you can. Or, you can make a facsimile of that. Or, you don't even need to pay any attention to that. You have some triangles and you have some squares and you have some fabric and some paper and you

create your own design. I try not to emphasize copying. You have to make your own code. And [then], what does your code mean?

Choice facilitated the conceptualization of ideas as students made decisions about the messages they wished to communicate. Teaching artists asked students to consider different options when creating their messages. Subsequently, they expanded the options available to students through questioning or through the techniques and materials presented.

The more choices students have, the more discernment they must practice in creating their project or completing their exercise. The process of selection, of consciously and deliberately accepting or rejecting elements in a story or a painting, increases students' awareness of the messages they wish to communicate, the effects they wish their messages to have, and how they might communicate their messages clearly using their understanding of signs and symbols. As a result, student voice— in both the literal and figurative sense— is exercised and strengthened.

Teaching artists validated and supported students' ideas during workshops. In observation of one teaching artist's program, praise and encouragement of students' ideas occurred consistently and frequently. Teaching artists, teachers, and students also narrated similar actions in interviews. Arts-integrated core subject content, such as history (Social Studies) and writing (ELA), related back to students' personal experiences via artistic practice. As described in the above excerpt, students made connections to the history of the Underground Railroad by creating their own coded messages using symbolic quilts in a manner similar to the women and men of that time period. However, the teaching artist did not ask students to copy the quilt examples she brought into the classroom. In doing so, the teaching artist communicated the value she placed on student ideas in the project.

**Teaching Artist 3:** Well, I remember they kept asking, “Do I have to reproduce this? Do I have to copy it or something?” And I would say, “No, you can do what you want to do...” Then, when it comes to the making of, I want to shift to their own personal message or their own personal creativity. What the quilt is on base level [is] it’s something that people created, it’s functional but they can also be on the wall. So, it’s trying to make that connection between the history or the past and [allow] the students [to] at least explore using different materials, but explore some of their own pattern, some of their own creativity. Maybe that’ll help [students] feel connected to that tradition and the history that they’re either directly or indirectly a part of. I mean, indirectly, you might say, even though they didn’t live during that period [and] directly a part of in terms of American history.

Another teaching artist who was brought into the school through the same Underground Railroad artist residency program taught poetry and creative writing by having eighth grade students write about their personal and family history. The creative writing process and arts practices in the YA workshops became a vehicle for students to incorporate their own experiences into their image, character, and plot development.

**Teaching Artist 5:** [All the writing workshops] have to do with the students remembering events in their lives, or people and places. So, it’s all dealing with them believing that their personal history and their family history has value. The object is to remember certain events with a prompt that I give them. And it should all be about them and their family...At the end, we have the big school performance where the students can read—they can pick out the piece that they like the best. We also try to make a booklet with some of the best pieces in it so that they can take it home and share.

The value of student experiences was communicated through the project criteria, which explicitly asked for student narratives. A second teaching artist who implemented a creative writing workshop with seventh graders also encouraged students to develop constructed narratives using their own experience as a reference. Though students were not required to share personal information, the teaching artist found that students put their own emotions and memories into their characters, settings, and plotlines. She explained that the process of creative writing enabled students to explore their actual personal experiences under the cover of fiction.

**Teaching Artist 6:** Because we talk about keeping characters real, we also talk about what would happen or what would your character respond to. “What would happen next?”

How do you think your character would respond to the situation that you've put them in?" So, even though we're not talking about their own personal feelings, what happens with creative writing is that kids bring a lot of their personal stuff to it anyway. Doing the Erie Canal program for years when the war in Iraq was at its peak, kids were putting bombs all over the Erie Canal. "Who told you there were bombs on the Erie Canal? There are no bombs." And people did. A couple of years after that, after it was at its peak, what I got at [the school] was a lot of: "I want peace, I want peace, I want peace, I want peace." I got this not just from [the school] but from all the schools I was working at: "I want peace." So, your personal stuff leaks out through your writing no matter what. I try very hard to tap into each individual and try to catch some of their writing. Like one girl in 7th grade, she was writing and I was like, "Oh, tell me, you know, tell me a little bit about what you've got here." And she said, "Well, this is a story, I'm so excited, this is a story about Josephine and Marianne." I was like, "Oh, that's great! Oh, they're sisters, I see they're sisters. Oh, it looks like something happens here." And she goes, "Well, yeah, I'm writing about my twin sister." I'm like, "You have a twin sister? That's awesome!" She's like, "Well, she died when I was a baby." She has never written about her before and [she said], "I'm going to write about her now." I said, "I'm so glad that you're bringing her into the story, like that's outstanding. You've never talked about her with anyone?" She goes, "No, I'm going to write about her." So, it comes through. Their emotional experiences come through the writing and it's my job as a teaching artist to be aware of and sensitive to that and try to catch it when it happens so that I can help them use the writing to work through it or identify it for them if [necessary]. Or, just to give them that little cheerleading that says that I'm so glad that you are putting this here. So, we have a chance to talk about it, but it's always through the art itself as opposed to a person.

When I asked students about their perceptions of the writing workshops specifically, they noted that how and what they wrote in YA programs differed from the writing they engaged in during the regular school day. Students explained that essays were a common exercise in the non-arts integrated school program, whereas fiction was not. Creative writing, or fiction writing, gave students the opportunity to express themselves and give voice to their own thoughts. In interviews, many students expressed greater engagement levels writing fiction than writing essays.

**DGT:** In terms of the writing workshops that you've experienced, do you remember those?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** Mm-hmm. [yes]

**DGT:** What do you think of those programs? Did they help you with writing?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** They helped us look at writing [from] a different point of view. Most of the time we're forced to write giant essays on just random topics the teacher

gives us. But then, when Young Audiences comes in, they give us one topic to write about, but we can write it any way we want—diary form, poetry, essay, anything. When we write them like this, it gives us a wider perspective and the teachers get to see how we write ourselves and not just based off of what they want us to write it as.

**DGT:** So, would you say you have more freedom of choice?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** Yes.

**DGT:** So you get to choose the type of writing? And then, do you also get to choose the content?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** Most of the time they just give us one general topic and then we get to go further with that.

**DGT:** Okay, one general topic and then you go further. Are there writing steps that are given to you?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** In school—yes. With Young Audiences—not really.

**DGT:** Not really. So is it more free-form then?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** Yes.

**DGT:** Does that help or hinder your writing?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** It helps because when we follow the writing that we're supposed to in school, we have to follow that specific format and if we don't follow that format, we get it wrong. But when we follow our own format and we put it all together ourselves, it's not really directed as wrong because it's just a different way of doing it.

**DGT:** Okay, so different, not wrong.

**Grade 8 Student 30:** Yeah, different, not wrong.

**DGT:** Do you do creative writing in any other situation, like outside of the workshops?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** No.

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**DGT:** You wrote your own story. The writing that you did in that class—is it different from the writing that you do in other classes?

**Grade 7 Student 26:** Kind of.

**DGT:** Can you describe how it is different?

**Grade 7 Student 26:** It's my own, not somebody else's.

**DGT:** It's your own.

**Grade 7 Student 26:** Like I'm making it up, not copying it or something.

**DGT:** Okay, you write fiction in the workshop.

**Grade 7 Student 26:** Yes.

**DGT:** You don't write fiction in your other classes.

**Grade 7 Student 26:** [nonverbal yes]

**DGT:** So, it's your own interest?

**Grade 7 Student 26:** Kind of, yeah.

**DGT:** Or your own imagination?

**Grade 7 Student 26:** Kind of both, but more interest.

**DGT:** More interest. Okay. Does the writing you did in the workshop influence your writing in other classes?

**Grade 7 Student 26:** [silence]

**DGT:** Does it help at all?

**Grade 7 Student 26:** Kind of.

**DGT:** Kind of—what does that mean?

**Grade 7 Student 26:** It's better, I speak my mind.

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**DGT:** So when you wrote in this workshop, was that writing in any way different from how you write in your other classes?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** Well, like in regular school, you write based upon a story you read or something, but in a workshop we wrote based upon what we felt according to how we wanted to write a story.

**DGT:** Do you write essays in your other classes?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** Yeah.

**DGT:** Do you ever write stories?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** Stories like out of nowhere?

**DGT:** Fiction.

**Grade 7 Student 42:** No, not really, no.

**DGT:** So would you say this is fiction that you wrote in the workshop?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** Yes.

Students also explained that their opinions and their peers' opinions were sought by teaching artists in the YA programs, which they generally appreciated. Students would additionally be asked to share their opinions with their peers. Because all students' voices were sought and because answers were not constrained by a 'right' or 'wrong' designation, students were able to engage in debates when responding to teaching artists' questions. In essence, students were given opportunities to respect each other's voices in the process of developing their own.

**DGT:** What was your favorite part?

**Grade 4 Student 40:** Having to—the interactive part.

**DGT:** The interactive part. Why did you think that was your favorite?

**Grade 4 Student 40:** Because you could tell what you thought about the music. We get to tell somebody what we think about the music and how you think the music was composed.

**DGT:** Oh. Do you usually do that?

**Grade 4 Student 40:** Not much.

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**DGT:** How did you interact with other students in these programs? Was it different or the same as other classes?

**Grade 6 Student 22:** Different. In other classes, it's like we have different opinions on questions. If you got the right answer on this question, then you saw [one teacher] or [another teacher] or whoever says it's right. But, in those programs, all you get was she would ask us different questions and it was kind of like debate a little bit.

**DGT:** Oh, so that was different?

**Grade 6 Student 22:** Yup.

**DGT:** So, does that mean there wasn't a right answer?

**Student 22:** It was your own opinion; there was no right answer and there was no wrong answer.

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**Teacher 14:** [Students are] always looking for what's the right answer and they're afraid to share because they don't know the right answer.

**DGT:** In the context of these programs is there a right answer?

**Teacher 14:** Yeah, students are always seeking: What IS the right answer? But when you tell them it's what you feel or what you think and as long as you can back it up, it's okay...

Teaching artists prompted students to explore their ideas without fear of failure because mistakes were not negatively evaluated. Students were able to carry a line of thought through to an artistic product regardless of its 'rightness' and, in so doing, were exposed to the entire logic of their thought process, which impacts their analytical skill. As one classroom teacher explained in describing a writing workshop, students "...take on, not necessarily become the character, but really study that character, not just by writing about it, but actually getting up and speaking the words and feeling how they would've felt and being able to express that." Students analyzed how thought led to action in their characters by using their own thought process as a guide.

**DGT:** Okay. And did the writing techniques that you learned—or because they weren't new as you said—did anything that you experienced in this workshop help you with the writing in the other classes?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** Yes.

**DGT:** Okay, why?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** Because in the workshop they—the [teaching artist], she tells us to not stop writing. So when you're just writing and writing and writing, it makes you think deeper. Do you know what I'm saying? It makes you think more and write stuff that, like, you wouldn't really write normally.

**DGT:** Are they imaginative things?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** Yes.

**DGT:** So there's a lot more writing than usual? Like in a normal—you say you have to write and write—what does that mean? That you delete and write and start over, or that you write a long story?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** It's like when she tells us to write she's saying—she tells us not to erase. So if we write something and you read it back and you think, oh, I shouldn't put it in there, you don't erase it. You just go along with the idea.

**DGT:** Ah, I got it. Okay. [pause] So how does that connect to your other writing? Can you tell me that?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** Um... because like in class, you know, like, how you read a book and then when you write an essay, you write your perception in a book. And in the workshop she helps us, like, think deeper. So, your perspective on the book is deeper than it was in the past.

**DGT:** Oh. So basically, even though you're not writing your own story per se—an essay—you're still using analysis or deeper thought on the book itself?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** Yes.

Arts-integrated activities in visual arts or music based workshops initiated similar exercises in thought. Students may not have had the same opportunities to exercise choice or explore their own ideas during the regular school program because the Common Core curriculum emphasizes specific outcomes. For example, in ELA, kindergarten through fifth grade anchor standards in writing emphasize the following text types and purposes:

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

(National Governors Association, 2010)

While creative writing falls under the purview of item three above, the technical aspects, as opposed to the expressive aspects, of narratives are highlighted. Conversely, in YA programs, the expressive aspects of creative writing were given more attention.

A few participants (students, teachers, and teaching artists) noted that teachers learned more about students' lives outside of school through YA workshops because teaching artists pulled students' personal experiences into the classroom through arts-integrated curricula. In the interview excerpt below, an ELA teacher explained that students have little time to express their interests during the regular school day due to the constraints of the Core curriculum.

**Teacher 15:** Well, I think in the beginning when [the teaching artist] comes in to get a base writing assessment, the kids are starting with the writing [and the teaching artist provides a picture for them to write about]. And then, the last thing that she does is she

gives them the same picture and she has them write another story...The picture is kind of solemn. So, what's interesting about that picture is it brings out a lot of personal stories about what's going on in the kids' lives, and you'll notice that the kids are really going through a lot personally that they don't really share unless something like [the YA workshop] brings it out of them. Because with the Core curriculum, you really don't have time to talk about anything personal. It's all about the curriculum. So, this really gives the kids an opportunity to talk about things in their personal life, which they love to share, and the core curriculum does not do that...when you're doing the regular everyday curriculum, Core curriculum does not give you an opportunity to talk about things that you want to talk about. Core curriculum is talking about things that you HAVE to talk about, whereas in Young Audiences [programs] there's more of an opportunity to discuss fun things, personal things.

The workshops were frequently described as providing a space for students to connect to content through their own interests. In voicing their stories and ideas, they had the opportunity to learn more about themselves in relation to their environment. As the school principal stated, the workshops may help students “[build] identity in the larger world... [and see], ‘Oh, this is who I am, this is how I’m going to be in the world’.” Consequently, by exploring their own interests, students may better clarify and communicate their perceptions regarding what they encounter in their daily reality.

### **Voice and English Language Learners (ELLs)**

Twenty-eight percent of the students attending Linwood Elementary are English Language Learners, and many are refugees and newcomer immigrants who have recently arrived in the United States. YA programs influence learning for ELL students in similar ways as other students described above, but in regards to the development of student voice, the arts-integrated programs play a special role. As mentioned previously, interviews with the three English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers included in the study sample revealed that many newcomer students had little to no prior formal education or experienced interrupted formal education. When many newcomer ELLs arrived at the school, they often remained nonverbal for several months' time before communicating in English.

**DGT:** Do you have a lot of students who come directly [from other countries], or who have very recently arrived from other countries?

**Teacher 9:** Oh yeah, absolutely, yes. In the first grade, just in the past two weeks, we had three students just recently arrived. In first grade, I have probably about seven students who came and [were] totally brand new throughout the year.

**DGT:** Refugees?

**Teacher 9:** A lot of them are refugees, yes. From all different countries: Bangladesh, African countries—Congo, Nigeria. It's usually mostly Asian region and African countries where we get students from.

**DGT:** Well, this will give some context to some of the things that I'm hearing from other people. Students at first, when they come here, do you find that they do not speak at all?

**Teacher 9:** It depends on their background, if they were not exposed to the English language. I have a boy who came up from Congo, but it seemed like he had some schooling in his French language and also he started talking relatively quickly. One boy came from Somalia, he's a refugee—he didn't talk for three months almost. So, it's a very individual process. I have a girl who did not speak a word and she only started to speak in March. I have a boy who started to speak two or three months after he came in. He was trying, he was more active, he was more outgoing, he wasn't as insecure. So it depends on the personality. If that person is very unconfident and timid—and children usually don't like to talk just because they feel like they're going to say something wrong or maybe they don't fully understand you—so they don't want to try because they're shy at first. Once they get the confidence, they can start talking in sentences. Sometimes I'm surprised they don't say anything, a word, and then I hear them speak in sentences because they feel confident enough to express themselves.

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**DGT:** You were saying there are some students who have trouble with the ten basic sight words. Are those students who are coming directly from other countries?

**Teacher 1:** Yes, they're all from other countries—often, refugees and SIFE.

**DGT:** SIFE?

**Teacher 1:** SIFE meaning students with interrupted formal education, so they may have never gone to school at all in their country. So they're coming here learning—seeing a school for the first time, being in a classroom, learning how to use a locker, the bathroom, how to get to lunch at a cafeteria. So, they're just trying to get used to the environment before they can even really start retaining anything.

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**DGT:** In your group, were there several languages spoken?

**Teacher 16:** Yes, there might be 11 in that classroom and they're all low incident languages, which is—

**DGT:** And they're all—?

**Teacher 16:** Low incident languages. So, they're not very common—like Nepali, Burmese, Karen, Karenni, Bengali, and there are some African dialects, too, and Swahili.

**DGT:** Are there multiple students who speak the language in the group?

**Teacher 16:** Depends on the language. There's at least two that speak [the same language], but not all of them.

ELL students who share the same language often group together. If one student in the group is more proficient in English, that student will act as an interpreter for other students during class. The ESL teachers and several teaching artists confirmed this fact. As described in an above interview excerpt, one teaching artist in particular explained that he purposely reorganized multilingual and ELL students into new student groups so they would have to communicate outside the comfort zone of their first language groups.

**DGT:** Did you find the students that did speak the same language were grouping together? Were they working together?

**Teacher 6:** They usually work together, yeah. They'll seek each other out and help each other.

**DGT:** Okay, does one tend to act as a translator?

**Teacher 16:** The student who has been here longer or, in some cases, the student who has the better understanding will act as the translator. In rare cases they'll just figure it out together, but usually one is more knowledgeable than the other.

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**DGT:** Do you find that students who speak the same language are helping each other and gravitate toward each other to act as translators?

**Teacher 9:** Yes. Oh yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

**DGT:** I'm sure that manifests in other classrooms as well right?

**Teacher 9:** Mm-hmm. Yes.

**DGT:** Okay.

**Teacher 9:** But I have a big language diversity in my classroom, so I barely have—well, maybe a couple of students have friends with their own language background. So it's Arabic—Arabic can be Yemeni, can be Iraqi and all these other different dialects, and some of them speak Somali and then French, then just so many—Nepali, Bengali. It's like a very big diversity [of languages]. But yes, if there is a language friend, partner, then yes, I try to put them together first to kind of help them to adjust to this new environment.

**DGT:** So how many languages do you have? [What is] a rough estimate of how many languages you have?

**Teacher 9:** In one classroom?

**DGT:** Yes.

**Teacher 9:** Yeah, probably like seven or eight, seven to ten sometimes.

ESL teachers expressed their concern was to increase the language proficiency of students who, in many cases, had a very basic level of English proficiency. Several other teachers, in addition to the ESL teachers interviewed, explained that many students have a very difficult time reading

text in English and expressing themselves in writing. They faced significant hurdles in accessing the English academic curriculum at grade level.

YA arts integration helped students gain entry into their new academic and social environment by providing opportunities for students to communicate using visual imagery and movement instead of relying more heavily on speech, and to engage in projects that did not require a high level of English proficiency to complete successfully. Emphasis on visual representation of narrative supported students' reading comprehension, and character acting with voice helped students read text aloud. Drawing assignments in which students illustrated narrative scenes and characters assisted ELL students in memorizing the meaning of English words and understanding descriptive sentences. Students could build their vocabulary and confidence as they were given opportunities to express themselves in ways that built on their existing knowledge while learning English.

**DGT:** What do you see them doing that relates to the [arts-integrated] programs in terms of their language development?

**Teacher 1:** Again, I haven't seen much of what they are doing, but what I see is more work on the arts aspect. So, more drawing and, in doing that, they're able to express themselves, whereas writing can be very, very difficult for this group of students. So I see them better able to connect to the literature...Also, because when they're reading it, I don't know if it's read to them or if they have to read it themselves, but if they're reading it themselves, they're not going to understand that level of difficulty of text—the low ESL students. So, having time, having it explained to them, having them draw it, having it represented will help them to understand it better.

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**DGT:** Do you have a lot of students who are [English Language] Learners?

**Teacher 4:** Yes.

**DGT:** Do you see any connection between their language development and this particular [YA workshop]?

**Teacher 4:** Yeah, oh yeah. I think one of the things was that the literature that they were reading was something that they were able to understand, to understand what was going on in the story, even if they were struggling a little bit reading it. We were reading it together, we were discussing it, and we were drawing pictures about it. We were acting out [the narrative], which is another part of [the workshop] that they really enjoyed—something that I've been doing with them all year anyway, where they would take on the role of a character, especially when they read the story. A lot of times, the reading with

expression is hard to get them to do. Even in third grade, they're still a little bit nervous about reading out loud. Then, even more so, they don't put any kind of voice into the characters, and that was another thing that we worked on with Young Audiences. And [the students] really seemed to enjoy that.

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**Teacher 5:** I noticed that the connections with the arts are another way of [students] being able to express themselves...So they might hear the Young Audience teacher read: "The dragon was flying through the air." They might remember that. They might visualize that and all of a sudden they'll draw something that I just read. And the kid might just remember, "Oh I'm going to draw that dragon in the air." But if the kid had to read that he might not be able to say the word dragon or say the word—well, he could probably say the word, 'air', but he might not know what it is. But, now he can draw a picture and then maybe he could say, "Oh yeah, this is when the teacher said that the dragon was flying through the air and his wings were getting tired." So at least he is able to do that and, like I said, they love to draw and color, so that gives them a feeling of success—that they're capable of doing something versus just giving them a story with some lined paper, saying read that and write me a four sentence summary, which is way beyond probably almost half the class.

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**Teacher 9:** Some ESL kids, they don't talk or they're shy to express themselves, but if you give them something to draw—some kids just amaze me with what they can draw. You know, even if they don't really speak English that much, they express themselves through drawing at that age. So, every child has some potential. They can express themselves in different ways, whether it's [with] words, drawing, dance, [or] singing.

Artists' use of non-verbal modes of expression during workshops provided different avenues for ELL students' success, such as when the artists explained content or delivered instruction supplemented by pictures and gestures. They used the techniques and practices of the arts field to model social interaction and verbal communication. During activities that involved acting, students could hear the nuances of speech in the tonal changes of the actor's voice or see the meaning of a sentence with exaggerated emotional delivery. When an artist performed a scene of a play, they were not only communicating with language; they used gestures, eye contact, facial expression, exaggerated emotion, and vocal change. Thus, students were given additional clues to decipher meaning during communication than they might usually receive in daily interactions. Moreover, by observing artists create and engage in artistic practice, students develop nuances of self-expression that could augment their communication and fill gaps in their

language proficiency while learning English. In discussion of the YA phonics program created for kindergarten students, a teaching artist explained that students learned English letters and sounds through dance movements, pictures, hand signs, and songs.

**DGT:** So, there are a lot of students who come from many different areas and [who speak] many different languages. How is their communication developed in the program? Or, how do they express themselves in the program? What opportunities to express themselves do they have?

**Teaching Artist 4:** I think that even though they may not have [an understanding of] all of the [English] language, body language and movement is the first form of communication. It's fluently universal. Because we'll do the songs, we'll have all the actions, so they can follow that. And then there's a visual sign, so they can look at it and try to make that eye recognition. So a visual recognition of the letter, and then we continually give the songs with the sounds and the letter so they have the opportunity if they can't speak it as well to practice speaking it in a song. So, that helps, but also it can be movement too. We'll do a hand sign and then we'll do movement to go with the sign.

**DGT:** So there are multiple ways of expressing oneself?

**Teaching Artist 4:** Mmm-hmm. [yes]

A teaching artist who implements music-based workshops with Young Audiences explained that he communicates to non-native English speakers through music when he travels to other countries and performs. When I asked how he addressed the language diversity at Linwood Elementary during workshops, he responded that communication among students was facilitated through music and gesture.

**Teaching Artist 7:** I can go into a country and not speak the language, but as a cultural exchange [event]—and sometimes they don't always have an interpreter there— my job is then to articulate how you play the blues. Blues and jazz are art forms respected all over the world. So, how do you articulate that? I don't have to say a word. I do it through my sign of what I play. I do it through the afrobeats rhythm. And that is one of the reasons why I start off with a song and [get] those who don't speak the language to clap. When they say music is the universal language, it really is a universal language. So whether it's been Ecuador or Kenya, I've done workshops without saying a word just using music [to] articulate what I'm saying. I go, "Aha, clap with me." I'll play, "Oh hey, you come here." [points and starts drumming on table] And they'll do the same thing [drumming on table]. And you can usually find somebody who really wants to play the keyboard look at me and smile, "Go ahead. Yeah." I don't find that to be a big thing for me. And it actually has taken some of the teachers by surprise. Most people would be, oh my god it's—they don't even speak the language. I'm like, bring it.

Multiple modes of expression in arts-integrated programs help ELL students to socialize as they acquire new strategies for communicating with peers and teachers who may not share their first language. For example, both students and teachers had opportunities to learn more about ELL students when they communicated their lived experiences using visual aids during YA programs. Newcomer refugee students wrote about their personal histories in poetry and journals, narrating their lives prior to arrival in the U.S. As mentioned in a previous section above, many teachers described learning more about students during YA workshops than they had learned during several years of interaction with students in their regular (non-arts) classes. One teaching artist expressed excitement to find students making comparisons between U.S. history (the Underground Railroad) and their own journeys. The increased understanding students gained due to the multimodal nature of instruction eventually led to connections between students' lived experiences and workshop content and resulted in personal connections among students and teachers.

**Teaching Artist 5:** ...because there were a number of students from Vietnam and Burma. So we had students drawing images of their village or their neighborhoods as opposed to writing about them, and that was really helpful. Then, there was one time when I had my tablet and we were discussing where we're from—that was the prompt: where I'm from—and since we had so many students [who were] not from the city, [we started using visual aids]. We were going by neighborhoods and then students told me that they were from— not Bangladesh, but it was some place very specific in the Middle East. So, I was simply using Google maps and I was sharing that with them. Those particular students got to share with the class what their village or their town looked like, which was really eye opening. It was just a fluke because I just happened to [say], “Oh, why don't we look and see where that is.” Someone else was like, “Oh, I'm from here. I'm from Vietnam.” Or, “I'm from Bangladesh.” Or, “I'm from...” So we just kept searching and seeing where those places were. Afterwards, I tried to ask teachers, “How did that go? Or, how do you think that went?” And that was very successful later on the next day or the next session. It was spilling over because students were still talking about the different terrain of a particular classmate's hometown compared to what they thought it was going to look like or the fact that it was all farmland and there were no big buildings.

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**Teaching Artist 5:** ...a lot of the ELLs were comparing the Underground Railroad movement to their refugee experiences or things that they had seen—things their family had experienced, things that they personally had experienced. It was very similar and it was really wonderful to see that they had understood and made these connections. It was like, “Ah, that’s so great! What a breakthrough! Exciting!” And [the classroom teacher] was really excited because she was like, “This is the most these kids have written.” So that was really successful.

Arts-integrated programs also allowed ELL students to learn at their own pace. For students struggling to learn English while also acquiring knowledge in core subjects, individualized pacing allowed students to succeed at their respective levels. As stated by the ESL teachers above, many newcomer ELLs arrived at Linwood Elementary with little to no prior formal education. As a result, when students were placed in a classroom with their grade and same-age peers, there were often vast gaps in knowledge among students, and many ELLs did not work at grade level. In YA programs, ELL students worked alongside their peers, using the same artistic processes and materials to explore similar subject matter.

**DGT:** What does this program do for [English Language Learners] specifically that might not be available through a regular curriculum?

**Teacher 12:** Well, it kind of works at their own pace. So, it’s more individualized. It’s definitely less intimidating, where for me, in regular math class, I’m moving on every day—move, move, move, move. I have my curriculum to get through whereas with [the teaching artist in the arts and technology workshop], with the games the kids are playing on the computer, they progress as they master the skills. So, it’s quite nice.

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**DGT:** Because [the school] has such a diverse student population with so many languages spoken, how does that play out in a creative writing program or a workshop that you implement?

**Teaching Artist 6:** Actually, it really works well. It really works well because each kid really comes to me where they’re at and I’m not asking them to do things that aren’t exactly at their level. I’m challenging them to go beyond what they think they can do so that at the end of the day they’ll start with just a little bit of writing. And they’ll come at the end, they’ll be like, “I couldn’t stop, it was great.” So, they’re challenging themselves. It’s each individual kid really coming to it with their knowledge and their ability and I try very hard to make sure I sit and talk with everybody at least for a couple of minutes during the course of the seven workshops so I can tap into where they are.

In contrast to the regular curriculum, ELL students were not required to meet standards set for native English speakers in YA programs because, as described in previous sections, standards and assessments were highly individualized. Teaching artists used internal benchmarks where the final destination varied for each student. Moreover, students were not subject to the same time constraints of the core curriculum, which requiring learning to occur at a pre-determined rate and a specified timeline. The artistic process is highly idiosyncratic, allowing students to build on the foundation of knowledge they already have, whether it is a rich history of experience outside of the U.S. or grade-level subject knowledge.

### **Peer Teaching for Social Learning**

Teaching artists used practices associated with a formative assessment framework to create an environment supportive of two main standards: conceptualization and voice. They honored individual voice and supported the conceptualization of students' ideas into form when they provided students with equal attention and when they encouraged each student to reach their potential with individualized instruction. Existent social and academic hierarchies could be flattened when past record of academic achievement held little bearing on student progress and when students were not tracked by demonstrated proficiency levels. In such a context, teaching artists were able to provide opportunities for students to acknowledge their own ideas and voices and those of their peers.

Because voice and conceptualization were the standards guiding the arts-integrated program, learning activities often took on a social dimension. Students were frequently asked to work together to solve problems and provide peer feedback in group activities, and students who effectively worked together to accomplish tasks were rewarded with praise and encouragement. An instructional strategy associated with formative assessment that appeared as a consistent

component of YA workshops was peer teaching. In interviews, teaching artists often described peer teaching as a key method for helping students understand content and meet the goals of the program.

Teaching artists asked students to use their voice and communicate their ideas in specific ways during the peer teaching experiences. One teaching artist who implemented an arts and technology workshop described peer teaching as an opportunity for students to demonstrate mastery of what they learned.

**Teaching Artist 2:** I also reward those who are good teachers and good support and good classmates. It's really important to be able to go over to somebody and help them instead of grabbing their mouse and doing it for them and being like, "No, you're doing it wrong, let me do this." I tell them, "Stop. Take your hands, hold them back here. Use voice. Use your words. Talk them through it." And if they're able to teach somebody else how to do something, that I think is the best proof of mastery.

In the above narration, the teaching artist shows a student how to use his own voice to help another student complete the task without taking away the other student's power. The student is asked not to speak or act for the other student, but to find a way to assist his peer in accomplishing the task independently. In this manner, the teaching artist distributes power evenly through his instruction because neither he nor any one student is positioned as the sole bearer of knowledge. Through his action, he teaches students how to honor the voices of their peers in addition to their own and that of their instructor.

The teaching artist who implemented the African Dance workshop explained that she facilitated peer teaching experiences by deliberately withholding information from students. In a dance presentation, she started the session by showing students dance steps at the front of the classroom. Students copied her movements as she danced in front of them. When they were asked to face each other, she was no longer visible for students to mimic her actions. They were subsequently left to remember the dance movements with the help of their peers.

**Teaching Artist 1:** So once the dance was done [in front of them], I gave them the movements that [needed] to be implemented. That's when they [got] into partners. "Get a partner, get a partner. You're going to stand this way, you're going to stand that way. Now you have approximately five minutes to review this dance facing each other and then we're going to actually have you perform it." That was hard for a lot of them because I wasn't giving them the movement, so they had to actually sit and work together to figure out. "Oh what is the next movement? What did she say this movement means? How do you sing the song?" So, that was challenging. I always do that. It's not me providing, as they say, a moment of entertainment. It's about—the term they use—edutainment. I'm going to provide you with education information, a moment of multicultural, hands-on experience. But, it's not about me just sitting there. No. I'm actively moving around the room. I'm actively letting them know: "Although this is your problem and although I gave you the problem, you still have to come up with the solution. I'm here to support you, but I will not give you the answer." So, yeah, that was pretty challenging, but I loved those moments because their faces when you see they have completed and accomplished that task, the results to me are when I see the smiles. You know, "I did this, yeah."

As in the arts and technology workshop, the teaching artist pushed students to find answers from their peers by stepping away from her role as the central knowledge source in the classroom, allowing the voices and ideas of students to take precedence. Students had opportunities to exhibit agency when they used voice to solve a problem and assist their peers without depending on the voice of an adult. In essence, students learned that their voice, or action, influenced their experience and that they also had the power to shape the outcome of their learning.

The peer teaching experiences promoted new relationships and interactions among students. As described previously, teaching artists grouped students together in configurations they may not have been accustomed to during the regular school day. Students who did not normally socialize were put into situations where they needed to rely on each other to accomplish tasks. In the music-based Underground Railroad workshop, a teaching artist intentionally split up student friendship and language groups and assigned students to work together with diverse capabilities. This was particularly useful for peer teaching experiences.

**DGT:** Can you describe what that interaction is like?

**Teaching Artist 7:** When I partner up?

**DGT:** When you partner up in groups and work together.

**Teaching Artist 7:** It's fantastic. It's phenomenal. I tend to notice kids sit together because I know [makes pointing gestures while speaking], "This is your friend, this is your friend, this is your friend." I notice the ones that are going to be walkie talkie and the ones that are more attitude-ish. So I challenge them. I make leaders out of them. Say [there is] one group and they really don't want to be broken up. "You're now team leader one, two, three, and four. Now you're in separate parts of the room and you got to lead your team." Now I pick the rest of them and break them up to be with those teams. Then, I notice in the beginning clapping, singing—who really does what, who really moves. I notice all these things. So I know maybe—plus I ask, too—whose got dancing experience, whose got singing experience, who can think they can sing, and, of course, they volunteer or don't. And I say, "Okay, who in the room knows who can help?" They start pointing at one another. So, participation is going on all along the way. They're going to point out "This person can rap. This person can sing. And this person can play drums." So, [they've] already identified and told me how I'm breaking [them] up. They don't know they're going to get broken up yet.

Students with voices that challenged authority were placed in leadership positions to exercise their voice in productive ways—that is, in service to the group. Thus, the teaching artist emphasized equity in the use of voice during social interaction. Students identified their talents and capabilities as well as those of their peers, acknowledging the unique contributions of each individual student.

The development of student voice allowed students to practice collaboration, negotiation, and teamwork during workshop activities. Interviews with students largely corroborated teaching artists' accounts of group activities and student interactions during workshops. Students confirmed being placed in situations requiring them to collectively solve problems and, as in the teaching artists' narrations above, provide assistance to their peers without preventing them from accomplishing tasks independently.

**DGT:** Do you interact differently in the workshops than you do in regular [non-arts] classes?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** In regular classes with your friends you just kind of are like, "Oh help me with this, help me with this. Can I copy your answers on this?" With the [YA workshops] we all sit there and we all talk together and don't just [say], "Yo, can you help me with this? Can you do this? Tell me how to do this." We all interact together to help and not just show each other.

**DGT:** Okay, so helping is different from showing.

**Grade 8 Student 30:** When you show someone something, it's you doing the work for them. When you're helping, you're just giving them a little nudge.

**DGT:** Okay, so maybe you take on more of the work, or the feedback is different in the sense that they're giving you advice versus doing it for you?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** Yes.

The above narration illustrates how students used their voice to guide their peers in problem solving as opposed to completing the work for them. Embedded in this action is an implied respect for individual capability and potential.

Interviews with students who participated in a workshop involving group story creation revealed that strategies for working through problems differed among students. Some students were able to incorporate all of their teammates' contributions into the final project by synthesizing ideas into a composite form, while others resorted to voting to choose the most popular ideas.

**DGT:** Was there any part [of the workshop] that you didn't like—that was your least favorite?

**Grade 3 Student 55:** Um, when we had some trouble figuring out as a group what to use and what the story was about. And, we kind of had some arguments and it ended like that.

**DGT:** Oh, with your peers, next to you?

**Grade 3 Student 55:** Mm-hmm. [yes]

**DGT:** What was the argument about?

**Grade 3 Student 55:** Some people wanted a different thing than the others. So, then we did a vote and when one thing got higher votes than the other one, the other person felt sad. So, we had to work things out. It was very hard.

**DGT:** It was...so, were you upset with the students who voted for the other one? How did you work that out?

**Grade 3 Student 55:** We tried to combine it together, and it worked out a lot better than our voting.

**DGT:** Oh, how did you combine it together?

**Grade 3 Student 55:** We thought of one thing that we all liked, and then we wrote about that and we started writing ideas.

**DGT:** You mean in [the teaching artist's] class?

**Grade 3 Student 55:** Mm-hmm. [yes]

**DGT:** So, some students did get upset?

**Grade 3 Student 55:** Yeah, but then we started a thing that we all liked and then we used everybody's ideas in a story.

**DGT:** So the theme that everyone liked was different from each individual theme?

**Grade 3 Student 55:** Mm-hmm. [yes]

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**DGT:** Did you write your own story? Did you work alone or in a group?

**Grade 3 Student 12:** In a group.

**DGT:** What was that like?

**Grade 3 Student 12:** It was kind of fun that all of us could, like, make up ideas.

**DGT:** So everyone's ideas were included in the story?

**Grade 3 Student 12:** A little.

**DGT:** What do you mean a little?

**Grade 3 Student 12:** Some of the things that they said couldn't come in the story because it wasn't about the story or the title.

**DGT:** So some of the ideas weren't put in. Was there ever any disagreement over which one to put in?

**Grade 3 Student 12:** A little.

**DGT:** A little. So what did you do when there was a disagreement on what to include?

**Grade 3 Student 12:** We voted it to see if you wanted it or if you didn't want it.

The process of working together to solve problems entailed compromise as students shared ideas that sometimes conflicted or required revision. Group activities required collaboration, teamwork, and negotiation to create a final product, activities that contribute to students' social development. Students were encouraged to help each other in ways that preserved each student's agency, work together to accomplish a task, and solve problems creatively, even as they encountered differing opinions on their input.

**DGT:** Okay, did you work in a group or alone?

**Grade 3 Student 43:** A group.

**DGT:** A group. What was that like?

**Grade 3 Student 43:** It was fun and...

**DGT:** It was fun. Was it hard to work with your neighbors?

**Grade 3 Student 43:** No.

**DGT:** No. What is hard to come up with characters?

**Grade 3 Student 43:** A little bit.

**DGT:** A little bit—why?

**Grade 3 Student 43:** Because there were lots of characters we could name and so we named a couple and it was kind of tricky.

**DGT:** It was kind of tricky. Did you disagree with your peers on anything?

**Grade 3 Student 43:** A little bit.

**DGT:** How did you resolve that?

**Grade 3 Student 43:** Um [pause]... I don't know.

**DGT:** I mean, if someone disagreed with you, how did you decide or pick a name?

**Grade 3 Student 43:** So, we just did the other person's character and we just moved on.

**DGT:** Oh, okay. So you kind of figured it out. Were there any arguments?

**Grade 3 Student 43:** A little.

**DGT:** Yeah? But did you, did anyone come away angry?

**Grade 3 Student 43:** Yeah.

**DGT:** Yeah, there were some angry students? Were you angry?

**Grade 3 Student 43:** No.

**DGT:** How did you keep working if someone got angry?

**Grade 3 Student 43:** Well, I would just ignore them and start writing.

**DGT:** Oh, okay. Is there anything that you learned about yourself in that program?

**Grade 3 Student 43:** Um, we worked together as one group and we finished it all.

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**DGT:** Did you write your own story in the class?

**Grade 3 Student 8:** Yes.

**DGT:** Alone or with a group?

**Grade 3 Student 8:** With the group.

**DGT:** What was that like?

**Grade 3 Student 8:** It was really fun. It was really hard too because [one group of students] was on one question and then the three girls were on another question and the two boys they were just laughing and then the three girls they were like already on the next page and then we had to help the boys. It got really frustrating.

**DGT:** Oh, because not everyone was on the same...

**Grade 3 Student 8:** Yeah, they kept laughing and making jokes so it was really hard but it was fun.

**DGT:** Did you finish the story?

**Grade 3 Student 8:** Yeah, I finished the story. I finished writing the story and I finished the panels, drawing panels and writing narrative text.

**DGT:** Okay, when you were working together did you have any disagreements?

**Grade 3 Student 8:** I sometimes did, like if they said something and the story was about a dragon getting lost, for example, and they said it was going to be a volcano, I really didn't agree with that because it doesn't really go along with the story.

**DGT:** So what happened when you disagreed? How did you find a solution?

**Grade 3 Student 8:** Well, I told them what my idea was and then I told them that every idea works. So then, after they heard my idea, everyone kept, like, going off my idea and then we made a story.

Teaching artists often provided opportunities to work in teams without pressure. Because individual student voice and the conceptualization of ideas were prioritized as teaching artists' educational objectives, the ability to work alone was an option presented to students. A few students decided to do so because they wanted to work on their own ideas. Thus, the students' decisions regarding how they wanted to use their ideas took precedence.

**DGT:** So, was it hard to work in a group?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** No.

**DGT:** You did work in a group, right?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** Yeah, but some of us wanted to work alone.

**DGT:** Did you get to work alone?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** Yeah.

**DGT:** Why did some of you want to work alone?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** Because sometimes when somebody wants something, somebody else picks something and then they don't want to write that thing down, they want to write their own thing. Then, they just want to ask the teacher to work alone so they can make their own.

**DGT:** Did you work alone?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** [nonverbal yes]

**DGT:** You did? You didn't work in the group?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** No.

**DGT:** So you wrote your own story?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** Yeah.

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**DGT:** Did the other students work together?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** Some of them did, some of them didn't.

**DGT:** Was that because there was an argument?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** No, it's just that they wanted to put in their own story.

**DGT:** Okay, did you work together or in groups in this workshop?

**Grade 3 Student 7:** We sometimes worked in groups, but it was mostly individual work.

**DGT:** When you did work in groups what was that like?

**Grade 3 Student 7:** It was a lot of chaos because some people had different ideas and some people didn't want to work together with each other and there was a lot of fighting. Because some people didn't have the same ideas and some people didn't want to compromise to write one whole thing about both ideas.

**DGT:** So you had to come up with a story together.

**Grade 3 Student 7:** Yes.

**DGT:** So that resulted in some disagreements.

**Grade 3 Student 7:** Yes.

**DGT:** Were those disagreements resolved by the end?

**Grade 3 Student 7:** Um...I don't know because sometimes they would just like, they would just be like forget about it. They won't write anything.

Although creative collaboration caused some difficulties and disagreements among students, many expressed the ability to incorporate their teammates' ideas into the final stories. Students noted enjoying group story creation regardless of the presence of disagreements and challenges,

and they narrated successful completion of their project. Overall, students appreciated idea sharing and noted that it was helpful and beneficial for their engagement in the project.

**DGT:** Did you write your own story?

**Grade 3 Student 41:** Yeah, we did.

**DGT:** With other students?

**Grade 3 Student 41:** Yeah.

**DGT:** Can you tell me what that was like?

**Grade 3 Student 41:** It was pretty cool because we—all of us had ideas and all of us agreed with the ideas.

**DGT:** Oh, were they different ideas?

**Grade 3 Student 41:** Yeah.

**DGT:** How did you decide on whose idea to use?

**Grade 3 Student 41:** We had to make it up—we had to make stuff up.

**DGT:** You had to make stuff up? Was there any disagreement about whose idea—?

**Grade 3 Student 41:** No.

**DGT:** No? You just decided?

**Grade 3 Student 41:** Yeah.

**DGT:** Okay. And how did you like working with other students to write a story?

**Grade 3 Student 41:** It was pretty fun.

**DGT:** It was fun? How does that compare to writing it on your own?

**Grade 3 Student 41:** It would be boring. I guess you [would] only have your own ideas, which would be pretty boring.

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**DGT:** During the workshop, did you work alone or did you ever work with students...other students?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** Yes, we compared our stories and our characters in our story.

**DGT:** Did you find that helpful at all?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** Yes, because you would [be] getting different ideas that you wouldn't think of from your partner and you could include that into your study, too.

The presence and development of student ideas and voices was supported by peer teaching, which positioned students to work together to solve problems, practice methods of communication that supported task completion, negotiate with peers regarding roles and ideas on projects, and engage in democratic practices to make group decisions. Teaching artists modeled these processes for students and provided positive reinforcement by emphasizing respect for each student's input and ability to perform tasks. Students, in turn, modeled the same processes with their peers. These activities can be characterized as social learning (Bandura, 1971), wherein

students learn “new patterns of behavior...through direct experience or by observing the behavior of others” (p. 3).

### **Developing Self-Efficacy through Arts Integration**

YA workshops typically engaged students in creative processes that, as previously stated, were not measurable according to predictable or predetermined outcomes. The projects students worked on provided multiple pathways to success, with more than one right answer to a problem, more than one method of communication, or more than one way of engaging with other students. Often, the success that students encountered with teaching artists increased their confidence and belief in their ability to achieve in other academic areas. For some students, the creative process provided them with a new way of working through their own self-doubt.

**DGT:** Was what you learned in this workshop helpful for other writing outside of the workshop?

**Grade 7 Student 52:** Oh yeah, because sometimes I like writing what’s on my mind because I used to do that when I was—in 2013, I used to write in my diary and so I thought, “Wow, my writing is so neat and it’s so precise that if I really put that into creative writing and writing for a topic I would be a really good student and I’d have good grades.”

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**Grade 3 Student 8:** ...I think [the teaching artist] said every answer counts, it’s not a right or wrong answer.

**DGT:** And what does that make you feel or think—that there are no right or wrong answers?

**Grade 3 Student 8:** It makes me feel confident in myself that I could say every answer that I think [is] correct. Because it really makes me feel good about myself that if I think of an answer, I don’t have to say that’s a wrong answer [or] that’s a right answer in my head. I could just say it and see if [the teaching artist] liked it.

The confidence that students described can be related to the construct of self-efficacy theorized by Bandura (1977). Self-efficacy reflects a belief in one’s ability to accomplish tasks, affect change, and achieve success. Indeed, many of the teaching artists’ instructional actions were congruent with the actions supporting self-efficacy development as defined by Bandura (1977).

Teaching artists often asked students to present their work in front of their peers, which was an uncommon experience in the regular school program. Interviews revealed that much of the opportunity for performance and presentation was provided through YA workshops, which enabled students to gain valuable experience in public speaking and often resulted in greater comfort and confidence presenting in front of same-age and older peers. Teaching artists cultivated audience respect and encouraged positive peer feedback, so students were generally rewarded if they had the courage to present in front of a group.

**Assistant Principal:** [The teaching artist] had kids who you would have never, ever thought be confident enough to read and [she] got them to read their writing pieces in front of their peers—and not only in front of the 7th grade, but in front of the 8th grade, too. So people who [were] older than them. They were confident enough to do that.

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**DGT:** So, when you went up to present your story, how did you find that experience?

**Grade 7 Student 48:** I found I was nervous, but then again excited [that] I was able to tell my story in front of other people just like me.

**DGT:** Did you get feedback from other students?

**Grade 7 Student 48:** Yeah, there was all clapping and everything.

**DGT:** Okay, did you learn anything about yourself through either the workshop or the performance?

**Grade 7 Student 48:** I think the performance, like, I've never done this before and I think I could do it again because I'd be fine doing it.

The positive reinforcement and encouragement that students received for their performances helped to provide a foundation of successful task completion, which could then form a basis for increased self-efficacy. That self-efficacy could then carry over to other activities outside of the YA context because “enhanced self-efficacy tends to generalize to other situations” (Bandura, 1977, p. 195).

Emphasis on participation and persistence in workshop projects were motivators for task completion. As noted by Bandura (1977), participation and persistence in tasks that students formerly viewed as difficult are activities that support self-efficacy development. Successful completion of projects could become a reference point for students to mirror and transfer their

success to other situations. YA programs often provided these reference points for students. During interviews, students narrated confidence in their writing skill and pride in their ability to complete a story after a YA creative writing workshop, which they then connected to their experiences in the school's ELA program. One student related his success in the workshop to his achievement of goals in general, stating that once he set a goal, he could achieve it.

**DGT:** Did you learn anything about yourself through this workshop?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** Um... well, because before the workshop I didn't really write, so it helped me think I could like actually write a story.

**DGT:** So, was it the first time you wrote a story that complete?

**Grade 7 Student 42:** Yes, like that long.

**DGT:** That long.

**Grade 7 Student 42:** Yeah.

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**DGT:** Did you learn anything about yourself ?

**Grade 7 Student 48:** I learned that anything that you—If you were to set a goal, you can achieve it. I said to myself, “How about I write this story?” And it was, like, a really good story. I was able to do it. If you set a goal, you will be able to achieve it. And I felt proud of myself seeing how I could do that.

**DGT:** At the beginning of the workshop, was it more difficult for you to write a story than at the end?

**Grade 7 Student 48:** Uh, in the beginning, yes. By the end, I was able to write a story and I had the courage and the effort to do it.

Many students described feeling supported by YA teaching artists despite making what they perceived as mistakes. Activities in YA programs may have been creatively challenging, but failure was generally not perceived as a concern—as narrated by students, teachers, and teaching artists in previous sections above. Bandura (1977) notes, “Persistence in activities that are subjectively threatening but in fact relatively safe produces, through experiences of mastery, further enhancement of self-efficacy” (p. 191). The YA context provided a relatively safe arena for students to develop their confidence in areas where they felt their skills were lacking, and the encouragement and praise they received bolstered their focus and persistence on completing the project as trust in their own abilities increased.

**Grade 7 Student 19:** Well, the students—they, like, tell you take out little pieces that you messed up on, but the teachers just say, “Yeah, you got it.” And then they build up your confidence more to talk in front of the whole class.

**DGT:** Students didn’t really play that same role?

**Grade 7 Student 19:** No.

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**DGT:** Did you learn anything about yourself in that workshop?

**Grade 7 Student 52:** I don’t know. Right now, [the teaching artist], the one that came in—she has kind of inspired me to write more, and I don’t usually like writing in English and that’s a big change in me. Because sometimes I really don’t like writing, but she was like, “Wow, you know what? Just have a good introduction and then the body will just come to you. You will understand it more as you get through every single sentence.”

One teacher explained that the combination of seeing a project through completion, receiving encouragement and praise for the work, and being rewarded by positive peer feedback translated into success that students brought with them when they returned to the regular (non-arts) curriculum, reflecting Bandura’s (1977) finding that self-efficacy tends to generalize. Students who may have seen themselves as behind their peers in learning or as incapable of achieving to standard because of repeated negative outcomes during the school day were exposed to a new pattern of achievement. They were able to see themselves differently and gain confidence to attempt the next assignment in the regular curriculum.

**DGT:** What do you see as the opportunities for success or failure available to students through the arts programs and how are those contrasted or compared to success or failure in other areas of school life?

**Teacher 5:** I think just, like I said, what I was saying a couple of different times about the kids just being successful on completing something. When they found out what the program was, maybe it took them one or two times to realize that, “Hey, maybe I can do this.” And then, that thought of being able to participate and all of a sudden put something on the paper and hear encouraging words and then you come up and you present it and then maybe the kids [are] clapping for you. I think that for some of those kids during the Young Audiences [program], they might have not experienced that for the first 30 weeks of the school year. And not to say we don’t do anything like that, but just to bring in a new program, a new person presenting it and then all of this stuff happening where everybody now feels like, “Hey, I’m not low, I’m not in desperate need. I’m just like anybody else and I’m up there drawing my picture, writing my words, explaining it to the class, and then I get some applause for it.” So I think most of the kids feel pretty good when they sit down. It might give them the confidence to say, “Oh, I can do something and now when [the teacher] comes back and says, ‘Okay, let’s take out our

Math books’.” It might be [for the student then], “Oh, I’m on a roll now.” So I think it helps build their self-esteem and give them confidence to be less reluctant in going on to the next subject or to the next learning opportunity.

Students who experience repeated failure at task completion may develop what Bandura (1977) refers to as avoidance or defense behaviors. These behaviors manifest as refusal to engage in processes where failure is expected or that emphasize perceived personal deficits. Because students are provided with opportunities to work at their own pace in YA workshops, students may gradually lessen resistance to these activities. Bandura (1997) explains that “when tasks are ordered in level of difficulty, the efficacy expectations of different individuals may be limited to simpler tasks, extend to moderately difficult ones, or include even the most taxing performances” (p. 194), and this approach has been successful in the development of efficacy over time (pp. 196-197). Similarly, pacing in YA workshops was structured to match students’ abilities and comfort levels, while still encouraging progress at a level appropriate for each individual student.

Teaching artists generally expressed support of students’ actions while working through creative problems, and students were validated in their ability to complete a task independently at their own pace. Independent task completion may build self-efficacy because “self-directed mastery provides opportunities to perfect coping skills, which lessen personal vulnerability to stress” (Bandura, 1977, p. 202). Teaching artists generally expressed support during students’ struggles with assignments, but refrained from providing a specific formula for students to follow. In the following narration, one teaching artist described how she encouraged students to work through difficulties in creative writing.

**Teaching Artist 6:** ...I identify right away that there is a certain inherent fear in creating and committing your thoughts to paper. There just is, and so I spend a lot of time saying, “Be brave. Be bold. Take a chance in your writing.” Because a lot of the inner turmoil when you’re doing creative writing, it’s inside, and you don’t really see it unless

somebody identifies that's what is going on. Because I write, I know [laughs]. I know that it happens. I know you're sitting here going, "Ugh, I have to write about a couch and then this girl comes in and I don't know what's going to happen next." And you get all this internal stuff that's not an external expression of emotions. I try to call it out for them and say, "It's okay. You know, your thoughts are valid and just let yourself write through any blocks that you have." So I have a chance to at least offer them that.

While the artist confirms students' fears, she also provides space for them to develop their own strategy for task completion. In the process, students have an opportunity to develop personal methods for dealing with difficulty—methods that may transfer to other contexts and situations where they are required to rely on their own efforts without the teaching artist's support.

Students were rewarded for their persistence in arts-integrated activities through the exhibition of their work in performances or presentations and acknowledgement of their efforts in the creative process itself. A sense of pride and ownership over task completion could be cultivated when students were recognized for their independent creative efforts by the school community. Rewards for student efforts also worked to confirm students' experiences of success and accomplishment in the ability to cope with difficulty while still reaching learning goals.

**Teaching Artist 5:** I took a lot of time trying to format everything, but I wanted it to look a little better. "Aw, it's too bad we didn't have enough money to get it really bound, it's just stapled."...But for them it was, you know, it might have been a Caldecott prize-winning book. They were so excited that their names were in the book and that was really pleasing. It made me think, oh, that's what all kids need. They need to have their name in a book. It's nice having a teacher give you an A and a gold star on your paper and give it back to you, but it's a whole other thing to have it printed and typed and your name is in it. Here, look at what I did. And that, I felt that could help them later on. If you have a little bit of pride about one thing, then you can go take the next step into something else and I think that was happening in there.

Self-efficacy could be developed in students due to the specific instructional approaches and processes common in YA programs, such as formative assessment strategies, standards that related to artistic practice, and social learning. Teaching artists helped create an environment supportive of students' social development in addition to their academic development, and

modeled behaviors that would contribute to students' task completion. The development of self-efficacy could then carry over to the non-arts school program, where students could apply their confidence to graded tasks.

### **Student Engagement via Emotion and Visualization**

Arts-integrated workshops were often described as 'fun', involving students with content in ways that connected to their personal interests. Interviews and observations revealed that 'fun' actually connoted specific, practiced, and intentional methods for achieving program goals. Teaching artists provided avenues for student engagement with the core curriculum by combining the materials and practices of the arts with delivery of core content. Across participant groups, the emotional dimension of workshops and the visualization techniques that artists implemented were cited as important devices for student engagement.

Teachers and administrators noted that at times students had difficulty connecting with core content for a variety of reasons, including inability to work at grade level and limited proficiency in English. The school principal explained that student motivation was an area that needed improvement at Linwood Elementary because students had difficulty connecting with the standardized curriculum. This was largely attributed to the fact that the standardized curriculum did not provide many opportunities for students to derive personal meaning from their work.

**Principal:** [Sighing] One of the big things we struggle with is motivation. We're trying to force feed them something that is very complicated and they just don't want it. They don't have to buy what we're selling. So, it does help—

**DGT:** Force feed them...?

**Principal:** Standards-based [curricula], and not that I have anything against that. That's what we do at school. But kids need to see more meaning to things than necessarily is in a core curriculum. So, [the arts-integrated program] helps them to build meaning for what they're doing in school. It helps them to have a sense that what they do on a daily basis has worth not only in what they hand in or what they get on a report card, but in building who they are for their future life.

In YA programs, emotion and visualization were key devices for helping students derive personal meaning from the core curriculum. Emotions represent universally accessible knowledge; all students have access to an understanding of emotions through their lived experiences. When information is delivered with emotion as a reference point, as displayed in the upcoming narrations from participants, students may relate the information to their lives both within and beyond the school context and it may acquire personal meaning. Visualization (or imagination), on the other hand, is a method for extending one's consciousness into experiences beyond those already lived. As students imagine new experiences associated with core subject matter, they may gain personal connections to content, which may lead to greater levels of student engagement. Thus, both emotion and visualization can be effective techniques for strengthening student engagement.

During the Underground Railroad residency, YA workshops explored the emotional dimension of historical narrative and helped students understand the meaning of historical events in a social context. For example, witnessing a teaching artist act out the psychological effects of slavery and the escape to freedom during the period of the Underground Railroad made history appear more real to students because it humanized the text students were exposed to via history books. The factual accounts of events in textbooks were supplemented by the personal connection students had with the actor's emotional narration. In contrast, teacher and student accounts of historical content (Social Studies) without arts integration revealed that opportunities to connect to history through emotion were limited.

**DGT:** Do the Young Audiences programs help you with your academics in any way?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** Yes. If we're going over certain topics and they come and have a topic that's similar to it, they can help us understand the topic a little more.

**DGT:** How? Like what is an example?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** [laughs] Social Studies—we were working with the Underground Railroad, that's the main thing we've done this year. We were working on that and we

were mostly confused on what it was and what would happen with the slaves. And Young Audiences would come in and do plays and scripts they wrote. They would do those and it made it easier for us to understand what was going on.

**DGT:** So, it made it easier for you to understand because of the narrative?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** It seemed to give us a more inside look than we were getting with just reading out of a book or reading off a piece of paper.

**DGT:** Like meaning an emotional take? What do you mean by inside look? I have to ask these questions.

**Grade 8 Student 30:** [We both laugh.] Well, it was just that when they were doing it we would just read off the paper. We didn't get to see what was going on. We could hear the difference in [the actor's] voice when they were scared and when they were happy. When it's on a piece of paper, you just read. It's, like, there's no emotion, no nothing, it's just there.

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**DGT:** Would you say that the emotional or narrative dimension she used to convey historical events is a technique that is common in the regular curriculum?

**Teacher 18:** [pause]...The narrative part, but in terms of probably being that expressive—not often, no. More often it's just cut-and-dry. Sometimes we'll do pieces that—we were talking about women's rights and the history of women's rights. We started talking about Malala, [and] it gets to be a little more emotionally charged. When we do debates, it gets to be a little bit more emotionally charged, but especially when it comes to teaching social studies and science, it's more often, "Okay, here's the facts." You come up with a variety of technical ways to present information. Not as often do we get to be blurring content in such an expressive manner.

Visualization strategies were sometimes implemented to derive emotional connections to content. For instance, students were asked to imagine themselves as runaway slaves during Underground Railroad workshops and write diary entries about the emotions they might feel while escaping to freedom. An eighth grade student explained the assignment pushed her to make a personal connection to events of that time period, deepening her understanding of the social and emotional impact of slavery.

**DGT:** So, in terms of exploring your own emotions in these workshops—because you mentioned the emotional dimension seems to be a good connecting point for academics—do you think that you explore your own emotions in this?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** Yes.

**DGT:** And what is that like?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** When we were doing the Underground Railroad [program], we got to see how the people lived and we were asked to write a diary entry on it. So, then we had to go and see how we would feel about being chased, running away, leaving our family. We had to write our feelings on the point. That was a little hard because most of

us haven't been in situations like that— [slows down her speech and modifies her statement] a lot of us haven't been in situations [like that]. And when we had to write about that we had to dig down deep, and we had to figure out the amount of emotion we would feel leaving our family behind. And that would be horrible. You would feel like you lost a part of yourself because you lost your family, or having your family being ripped away from you and being sold. It's just that horrid feeling of knowing you're alone now.

**DGT:** So, from the beginning to the end of, let's say, the Underground Railroad workshop—because you said it was difficult at first—how did that change towards the end?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** At first, we didn't have any experience with it. We talked about it before in the younger grades, but we weren't expected to do much with it. We were just—here, this is what you need to know, there you go. The further we got into the subject, the more we begin to realize that it impacted everyone's lives in different ways.

**DGT:** Okay.

**Grade 8 Student 30:** The way we looked at it at first was, "Yeah, whatever, the topic." The further we got into it, we realized people have lived this, people had to go through this, people had to run away to save their lives and that they had to go through a bunch of different hardships just so they could have a new life.

**DGT:** [pause] So, there was a change or there wasn't?

**Grade 8 Student 30:** There was.

In YA writing workshops, students cultivated personal connections to the characters in their writing by first acting out the characters' emotions. One student stated her interest in writing character dialogue, while nonexistent at the start of the workshop, grew when she became more aware of how the emotional delivery of a line could alter the meaning of a word or a sentence. She learned that the manner in which a character spoke a line of text could change the audience's perspective on that character's identity, and she subsequently incorporated this new understanding into her writing.

**DGT:** Now, it's my understanding that there were actors, or that students acted out characters—that was the case?

**Grade 7 Student 52:** Yeah, well it was kind of cool, but some people didn't really go into the character as much. Like if someone said [monotone speech], "Wow, don't hurt me."—they would just say it as in a plain tone. But I think when she was here she was probably teaching us about emotion. It's like [animated speech], "Wow, don't hurt me." Like, raising your tone when you begin sentences and then lowering it when you end the sentence. Yeah, like this.

**DGT:** She taught you how to speak a sentence and act it out?

**Grade 7 Student 52:** Yeah, because some people have the exact same tone as they write a story. Like, they didn't raise their voice when a character said something and that's what—I think that's what the main part of it was. She taught us how to raise our voice or be connected when a character is saying a line or a phrase. Like dialogue, she wanted us to do dialogue in the story. For me, I don't really like dialogue as much. I really like saying what the characters are doing and saying, oh, they're shocked or surprised, instead of giving them actual words to say.

...

**DGT:** Was it new to add emotion to a sentence?

**Grade 7 Student 52:** I mean it was new because as I saw how the dialogue grew I was like, wow, this could really mean something if people actually started to get into the character and speak as they were the character themselves. So I guess it's not really that boring after all because instead of just saying what they're doing, you can actually get an emotion because the way that you're going to speak [the] dialogue would really change how you perceive the character. Because if the person says, "Don't hurt me," if you said it angrily or sadly, you would've gotten way different perspectives from everyone like, "Oh, she's so mean. Why is she being so hateful?" And another person could say, "Oh she is so, she is in duress, or distress." So, I like dialogue, it's pretty cool for me since she came in.

One interviewed ELA teacher explained that, in years past, a YA artist engaged students in creative writing by introducing students to color as a symbol for emotion. She asked students to use their emotional association with specific colors as a starting point for their expression.

Student engagement was based on students' understanding of emotions instead of the technical aspects of writing, which moved students to have a personal investment in the writing process.

**Teacher 14:** Yeah, a few years ago when Young Audiences was here, we had a woman who came in and would speak to the children about writing and she was able to, in just a few visits, get the children excited and motivated about writing. It was just about expressing yourself, and there was no wrong. You could take the toughest kid in the class who would resist any assignment and suddenly his pencil was moving. She would have creative lessons. She would come in maybe twice a month, I think, or three times a month or weekly and she would come in—she'd have a little bin of crayons or some bag of tricks—and she would say, "Today we're going to take a color and we're going to write with a color because sometimes colors express emotions," and, "You know, what color draws you in?" She was just able to present the lesson in such a way that the kids now were connecting their emotions with the color choice, and now with what they were going to say with their writing. So, they added all those things together and, from my perspective, I was excited because it was nice to see somebody come in and inspire children to write, which was often a very difficult task. Of course the writing has evolved now to something slightly different, but I believe that enrichment experience about understanding feelings and how to convey them in writing was successfully done by

someone like [the teaching artist] because she was able to connect with the children and get the children to sort of self-reflect and connect with what she was trying to accomplish.

Visualization was also used as a device for student engagement with ELA content, and it was particularly helpful in promoting students' reading comprehension. In interviews, several students revealed that visualization made reading more enjoyable for them. One student in particular explained that visualization was helpful for focusing on the narrative when illustrations were distracting his attention. The student communicated that he would embellish the story with details in his imagination.

**DGT:** Do you think that this program helped you with your other class in any way?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** Yeah.

**DGT:** It did? How?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** Because she taught us about visualization and then every time we read a story without pictures we just imagine it.

**DGT:** Is that what you're doing now when you hear a story?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** Like, when I read my own story that doesn't have any pictures, I just visualize it in my mind.

**DGT:** Oh. What does that do to reading?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** It helps...[pause] it helps you read even more because then if you have no books that have pictures and you want to buy something, somebody that you know could just tell you that you don't need to buy a new book. You could just get that book, read it and then like visualize it in your...

**DGT:** Do you think that helps you read more?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** [nonverbal yes]

**DGT:** It does? Like more books without pictures? So do you think reading is fun with visualization?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** Yeah.

**DGT:** Hmm, that sounds like a really useful technique. That sounds like really useful learning... Just one last thing, what's your favorite thing about this program?

**Grade 3 Student 57:** The reading and the visualization.

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**DGT:** Do you think her program helped you with school?

**Grade 3 Student 8:** Yeah, I think it helped me with school a lot because now when I read stories I can use visualization in my head and picture stuff, how the story is going if there's no pictures.

**DGT:** Did she teach you visualization? Had you ever known about visualization before?

**Grade 3 Student 8:** Well, I didn't know you could picture stuff in your head until she actually taught me that you could picture stuff in your head when you're reading because it really helps you understand the story more.

**DGT:** Okay. So when you read—you said you read chapter books.

**Grade 3 Student 8:** Yeah.

**DGT:** Do those have pictures?

**Grade 3 Student 8:** Well, the chapter books that I read, they don't have pictures because when chapter books have pictures and I'm reading them, it really doesn't help me focus more on the story because I focus more on the picture and that helps me get off topic of what I'm reading.

**DGT:** Okay, did you read chapter books before the workshop or after?

**Grade 3 Student 8:** Uh, I read them, a couple of chapter books before.

**DGT:** Does visualization change how you read them?

**Grade 3 Student 8:** Yes.

**DGT:** So what do you do now when you read a chapter book?

**Grade 3 Student 8:** Uh, I still don't read with the pictures because visualization—I really like it because I pick up chapter books or my mom she buys me chapter books and I use visualization. Because if [the story is] telling me that [a character] lost a puppy or someone, I could visualize that they were really sad and the puppy that [was] really lost or that the puppy got held in the pound. If [the story] doesn't tell, I could give extra details of what happened to the puppy.

Visualization also supported students' writing development. Creating pictures to imagine potential narratives or drawing out actions to understand a story's plot helped students to engage with ELA activities and scaffolded reading and writing processes for some of the students interviewed. It should be noted that I did not reference this particular technique in interview questions. Students mentioned visualization as a supportive technique of their own volition, without my influence or suggestion.

**DGT:** So about writing, did you feel it was easier by the end or harder?

**Grade 3 Student 32:** Easier.

**DGT:** Easier? What became easier?

**Grade 3 Student 32:** It's that when I write sometimes I can't write because I don't know what I'm going to write about and to start it helps me to imagine and then decide.

**DGT:** So if you imagine it first, then you can write? Is making pictures part of that? Do you have to make pictures first and then write?

**Grade 3 Student 32:** Yes.

**DGT:** So now do you draw this out first before writing or do you just think of it?

**Grade 3 Student 32:** I draw and sometimes I think.

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**DGT:** You talked about drawing. How does that relate to or connect to writing and reading?

**Grade 3 Student 41:** Because, like, in writing, a picture shows how it's connected to reading. So, like, we read the story about my father and his dragon. The pictures showed us how it was happening in the story—what was happening in the story.

**DGT:** Oh, does that change reading and writing—drawing or pictures?

**Grade 3 Student 41:** No.

**DGT:** No? Okay. Does it make it more interesting?

**Grade 3 Student 41:** Yeah.

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**DGT:** Did you learn anything about writing?

**Grade 3 Student 55:** Yes. You can draw a picture first and then write about it—and it helps you write a lot more—it helps writing—it makes it easier to write when you draw pictures.

**DGT:** And these are all new things that you didn't know before?

**Grade 3 Student 55:** Mm-hmm. [yes]

While not exclusive to artistic practice, emotion and visualization techniques may be commonly associated with the creation of artistic products in theatre, creative writing, music, and visual arts. Artists use emotion as a device to connect with audiences, communicate their experience, and create meaning, and visualization may help artists discover new ideas for their work. In contrast, standardized curricula in schools may emphasize the acquisition of factual information distant from emotion and imagination, or disconnected from students' daily reality. Teaching artists may bring artistic techniques via arts-integrated programs that bridge students' lived experiences with school knowledge so that they may derive personal meaning from their work. These personal connections foster the engagement necessary for academic success as students invest time and attention developing skill and knowledge in core content areas.

### **Arts Access**

Linwood Elementary is a majority-minority, urban elementary school serving a large population of students with low-SES backgrounds. For many students interviewed, YA performances and workshops provided them with new cultural experiences they did not frequently access during or after the school day. For instance, several students described never having seen a cello in person before attending a performance with a professional cellist in the

school auditorium, and other students described specific elements of YA arts programs that were not present in the Art and Music courses at the school due to resource limitations.

**DGT:** Is it different from music class?

**Grade 4 Student 36:** No, not really.

**DGT:** No, it's the same. So when you go to music, did you already know some of the things that she was telling you when you went to the performance?

**Grade 4 Student 36:** No.

**DGT:** What was different?

**Grade 4 Student 36:** We really—the thing that's different is that we really don't have that many string instruments, we only have guitar and so I can't play the violin. I want to, but I only play the guitar, so I can't play the cello either.

**DGT:** So, was that the first time you saw a cello in person?

**Grade 4 Student 36:** No, I went to [see the city orchestra] before.

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**DGT:** Is there anything new that you learned in this performance?

**Grade 4 Student 56:** The cello is very big. I did not know it uses the bottom piece to hold it because in the pictures when we learn about them it doesn't have that. It just has the point. So that was new.

...

**DGT:** Was there anything else that you learned in the performance? What else did she teach?

**Grade 4 Student 56:** She, um, well I didn't learn something, but I had many questions. But I forgot them because it's been so long since they performed. One more interesting thing—I did not know the cello could play very high, too. Because we usually learn that they just play low, the bigger the instrument, the lower the sound. I did not know. They did not tell us that the cello could play high.

**DGT:** Have you seen a cello in person before?

**Grade 4 Student 56:** Only when she was playing it. We only saw it in books...but yeah.

**DGT:** Do you go to see music outside?

**Grade 4 Student 56:** Outside? When we go on field trips, we go to the orchestra.

**DGT:** Field trips with the school to the orchestra?

**Grade 4 Student 56:** Yeah.

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**Grade 5 Student 24:** We have [instruments] that are in the string family [in the school music program], but we only have one which is the guitar.

**DGT:** Oh, okay, so you've never seen [the cello] before?

**Grade 5 Student 24:** Well, I have on TV, but not really in real life.

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**DGT:** Was there anything from the performance that was new, that hadn't been taught in music or art?

**Grade 5 Student 50:** The cello [performance]?

**DGT:** Yes.

**Grade 5 Student 50:** She actually—we don't have cellos here, so she taught us about the cello. She said it was shaped and it's from the same family as the guitar and strings family, but it's very different in many ways. The shape and how you have to have the metal rod at the end—that's the proper way to use it—and how the strings are only little but you can still move your fingers certain ways to make the music.

**DGT:** And had you seen a cello in person or heard it in person before?

**Grade 5 Student 50:** Not in person.

A few students in the study sample described limited experience visiting art museums or seeing art in person, while several other students confirmed previous experience visiting museums and seeing art in non-school venues, such as art galleries. It is difficult to determine the extent to which YA programs increase students' access to the arts in concrete terms through the present research design; a quantitative study would produce a clearer picture in this regard. However, it should be noted that for many students mentioning arts experiences outside of schools, those experiences tended to be located in public no-fee venues or venues not exclusively dedicated to the arts. For example, students narrated seeing arts and music in public parks, on a school field trip to an orchestra performance, and at a historical museum.

Several previous studies have documented limited arts access for student populations of low SES (Motton, 2010; Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012). The following student's narration stands out as indicative of previous findings for low SES student populations, but it is not possible to generalize his experience to the broader student population with the amount and type of data at hand.

**DGT:** And looking at art like that, is that new too?

**Grade 4 Student 23:** Yeah.

**DGT:** You don't do that in any other class?

**Grade 4 Student 23:** The first picture that I saw, I've seen it before.

**DGT:** You have—like where?

**Grade 4 Student 23:** It was like a face statue near a museum in [the park]. That skinny statue, but I didn't go into the museum. I went to [the park] and we went by it.

**DGT:** So you know that sculpture.

**Grade 4 Student 23:** Yeah.

**DGT:** Okay.

**Grade 4 Student 23:** The second one was just a painting.

**DGT:** A yellow painting. You haven't seen that one?

**Grade 4 Student 23:** Never.

**DGT:** Have you been inside that museum?

**Grade 4 Student 23:** No.

**DGT:** Does that painting make you want to go inside? I mean, does seeing those artworks make you want to go into the museum?

**Grade 4 Student 23:** I do want to go in there, but I can't.

**DGT:** Why?

**Grade 4 Student 23:** Um, my mom might not have enough money to get gas to go.

Teachers did communicate they believed YA arts programs filled a gap in access. They observed that students at Linwood Elementary were not exposed to as many arts opportunities as, for example, students in regional suburban schools. Families of low-SES may not have the resources to leave their immediate neighborhoods for arts activities or attend fee-based arts programs outside the school and YA programs may provide students with cultural experiences not available to them outside of the school day.

**Teacher 10:** I think what I observe is that the children in general in the city are not exposed to the same kind of music opportunities that outside the city were exposed to, and having Young Audiences coming in with this type of program I think is invaluable. Because it's an exposure to music and the fun that music can be. They're learning letter sounds through music [and] movement. We're not exposed to that.

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**Teacher 14:** Well, personally, teaching ELA, like I said, I think they get enrichment. They get another perspective. Many of these children do not get many opportunities to be outside their home and see things in their communities and in the world, so it's wonderful when we have an opportunity for somebody with such expertise to come in and share their expertise with these inner city kids. I think it's valuable.

While exact numbers regarding the extent of arts access available to students at Linwood Elementary through YA arts-integrated programs relative to arts access during and after the school day were not documented, it is evident that YA programs provided unique opportunities for many students. These opportunities may either augment or bridge the gap in arts access and may provide supplemental resources to the school's Art and Music programs with limited funding. Further study should be undertaken with a larger sample of students to better

understand the role of YA programs in providing unique arts experiences to this student population.

### **YA Programs and Special Education**

Interviews with special education teachers revealed that YA workshops held great potential for providing meaningful arts integration experiences to students with special needs, but modifications were necessary. The interactive and visual elements of the programs mirrored the strategies teachers used in their own classrooms to engage students, and they were appreciative of the artists' efforts to involve all students in both the mainstream and 611 classrooms. They suggested that teaching artists combine hands-on activities allowing students physical movement with more animated, visual elements to achieve greater success. The arts and technology program was noted as particularly successful because multimedia and educational software programs were interactive and made tasks like reading, for example, more accessible to their students.

**DGT:** So, outside of the workshop, would you say that those opportunities for failure are different or the same?

**Teacher 17:** I think they're different.

**DGT:** How are they different?

**Teacher 17:** I think they're different because you know my kids aren't guided towards a general diploma. They're going to get an IEP diploma, which means their education is tailored to what their specific needs are. A lot of my students are learning disabled. They're not able to get an actual textbook and actually read it because they need it simplified. Like when we do notes, we take notes on the board. I will do some notes in which they have to fill in the key important parts. That's how they're different.

**DGT:** What about success? Why is it different?

**Teacher 17:** Success, I think it's different because, again, my kids are keyed towards [the] visual. So when someone is standing out there talking and animated, they're more easily entertained... [and] they retain it better.

**DGT:** So, even though they're not frontloaded in this particular case, there is still some level of success because of the animated visual nature of the workshop?

**Teacher 17:** Yes, mm-hmm, absolutely.

**DGT:** If those two [elements] were together it would be even more successful.

**Teacher 17:** Yes, there would be even more success.

\*\*\*

**Teacher 7:** What worked? Okay, let's see. Well, when we started assigning characters, that worked.

**DGT:** Assigning characters in what way?

**Teacher 7:** The story. Here's why this is important: because these kids have ADHD and they're allowed to have legitimate movement. So, if you can give them a role where they're up and they're moving, once again, you're helping them. There are a lot of disabilities in the room. So, you match that up. What else worked that was good? They loved the story. I think another important thing is more hands-on [work] with art activities—huge. These are hands-on activity kids and, yes, they drew a little picture in panels and stuff like that, but with my kids, it's called crafts and art and combining all that together.

\*\*\*

**Teacher 3:** So a lot of my kids that struggle now seemed to understand because they had a visual connection and they were moving around. Because my class is half special ed, they learn in different ways than some of the other kids. So, for them to get up and physically do something was very beneficial for them.

\*\*\*

**Teacher 17:** In my classroom, I have intellectual disability, I have learning disability, I have other health impaired. I believe those are the three main categories that they fall under. A lot of the material has to be presented to them in a different way as opposed to the normal learning style. I do a lot of pre-notes with them. I do a lot of computer active work, like I do a website called Brainpop, which is an interactive way for them to get the material as opposed to reading out of a textbook—because a lot of them are below level in reading...they're able to understand it better as opposed to reading it through a basic textbook style.

**DGT:** So the multimedia is key?

**Teacher 17:** Yes, very key.

**DGT:** And the computers are helpful.

**Teacher 17:** Mm-hmm. [yes]

**DGT:** It's not just that particular program, but computers in general?

**Teacher 17:** Nope, computers in general.

\*\*\*

**Teacher 2:** The kids loved the fact that everybody was included. About half of the class [is comprised of] students with disabilities, but they like being included. It was just an easygoing atmosphere. Everybody really looked forward to [the teaching artist] because she would call on everybody. And I think that's what—everybody felt like they all got a turn and they were being respected and appreciated for the individual things they bring to the table. Some of the kids are more spunky, more theatrical. Other kids just excel in different areas [and] it brought out their positive traits and [the teaching artist] would complement [them] with their acting and drawing.

One specific area of improvement was repeatedly emphasized; three of the four special education teachers requested more time. One teacher requested time for her students to complete tasks and projects because her students worked at a slower pace. She requested the timing of the

workshop be adjusted to occur over a longer period by breaking up the program into smaller increments of instruction. This would allow special education teachers to give students additional support in completing assignments between sessions. A second teacher had students with severe emotional disabilities in her 611 classroom, and she specifically asked for time to meet with teaching artists before the workshop began in order to advise them of her students' specific needs. A third teacher wanted to be notified of YA program activities in advance so that she could provide her students with prerequisite knowledge related to the content that would be covered. Her students had difficulty understanding the YA performance they attended.

**Teacher 2:** Now as far as a negative, I think—well, not so much a negative because I know that with this program you're limited in time, but I think if we had more time—like maybe I think we started this, I don't know, a month and a half ago—if this could be something that the kids could do for a longer frame of time, I think it would work out better. I think some of the writing from activities required them to kind of keep to a pace. A lot of my children need more time. So, time to think about what they're doing, time to go back into the reading to find the answers, and then time to think about how they're going to formulate their responses. So, if they had more time allotted for them, I think that would be beneficial, at least for my students with disabilities...Some of them felt very rushed and then they kind of gave up [and said], "Oh, I don't know what I'm doing."

\*\*\*

**Teacher 7:** In my opinion, I think it's really important that who is going to come into the classroom really sits down with the teacher and spends some time in regards to the classroom dynamics to be aware of the behavior management skills that are put into the classroom and to understand that if you're working with kids that have severe emotional disabilities, there are certain triggers that I as the teacher would like to turnkey and share to the performer that's coming into the room. Also, when you're working in a 611 classroom, these children have a difficult time embracing someone new coming into the classroom because my class is run [in a] very structured [way]. So, several times when the performer would come into the room they're a little thrown off. I just think that performers from Young Audiences coming into a 611 classroom need to spend time with the teacher before they even set foot into the room.

\*\*\*

**Teacher 17:** We've seen one performance and they came back asking a lot of questions. Sometimes I think if I would've known ahead of time, I could've gave them a little frontload knowledge on whatever subject it was because they came back and they were kind of confused. They enjoyed the performance, don't get me wrong, but they had a lot of questions after the fact. You know if I was told, "Okay, this speaker is coming and this is the topic we're going to talk about.", I could've [frontloaded] it the week before and we could've built on it so they had a little bit better understanding.

The suggested modifications would allow teaching artists, teachers, and students to prepare for a developmentally appropriate experience. All of the aforementioned opportunities that YA programs provide to students without special needs, such as multimodal learning, self-efficacy development, individualized pacing and engagement with core content, could be provided to students with special needs with additional time and intentional planning of workshop activities. Already existing elements of the workshops, such as technology integration and interactive projects, could be augmented. Using these elements would allow workshops to be more beneficial for students of varying abilities while retaining key qualities of the arts-integrated experiences.

### **Conclusion**

This study provides an in-depth look at Young Audiences' arts-integrated programs at one public elementary school in the Western New York region. It should be noted that the results presented in this report reflect the context of a specific school site and a specific non-profit arts organization; characteristics of the programs should not be interpreted to represent all arts-integrated programs indiscriminately. However, elements of the programs may reflect aspects of other arts-integrated programs and common patterns within teaching artists' pedagogy and practice.

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## Appendix A

## Number Identification of Students by Grade Level

Table 4

*Student Totals by Grade Level*

Student	Grade
2	7
3	K
4	3
5	3
6	3
7	7
8	3
9	7
10	7
11	7
12	3
13	3
15	5
16	6
17	4
18	7
19	7
21	3
22	6
23	4
24	5
25	7
26	7
27	3
28	5
30	8
31	4
32	3
33	K
34	K
35	7
36	4
37	2
38	3
39	7
40	4
41	3
42	7

Student	Grade
43	3
44	6
45	6
46	7
47	3
48	7
49	K
50	5
51	K
52	7
53	K
54	7
55	3
56	4
57	3
58	2
59	3
61	3
62	5
63	5
64	1
65	3
66	6

## Appendix B

### SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHING ARTISTS

#### YA Programs

What programs do you implement?

Tell me about the YA programs at the school. What are they like?

Tell me about your role at the school.

How long have you been involved with programming at the school?

How do you create your program?

Do students influence the implementation of programming? If so, how?

#### Academic Achievement

Do you work with teachers and administrators to plan and modify programming? If so, how?

How would you describe the roles of teachers and administrators in YA arts programming?

Have you noticed significant connections between the students' experiences in the YA arts programs and their experiences in other areas of school life?

Would you say that YA arts programs affect student academic performance? Why or why not?

#### School Attendance

Do you notice a connection between students' school attendance and YA arts programs? If so, can you describe that connection?

#### Self-Esteem

*Reference: Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, Rosenberg, M. (1965)*

What are the opportunities for success or failure available to students through the YA arts programs?

Do those opportunities connect to opportunities for success or failure in other areas of school life in any meaningful way?

What opportunities do students have to learn about themselves through YA arts programs?

Do any of the programs you implement address students' self-esteem in any way? Is self-esteem a focus of any of the programs you teach? If so, please describe.

#### Emotional Intelligence

*Reference: Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, Gross, J.J., & John, O.P. (2013)*

What individual and group activities do students engage in during YA arts programs? Do students' actions during these activities translate to other areas of school life?

What opportunities for exploring emotions are available to students through YA arts programs?

How do students interact with each other during YA arts programs?

Do student interactions in YA programs connect to other classes in any way?

## Appendix C

### SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

#### **YA Programs**

Tell me about the YA programs at the school. What are they like?

What influenced your decision to become involved with YA programs?

How is your role as a teacher or administrator affected by the presence of YA programming in school curriculum?

#### **Academic Achievement**

Have you noticed significant connections between the students' experiences in the YA arts programs and their experiences in other academic subjects?

Would you say that YA arts programs affect student academic performance? Why or why not?

#### **School Attendance**

Do you notice a connection between students' school attendance and YA arts programs? If so, can you describe that connection?

#### **Self-Esteem**

*Reference: Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, Rosenberg, M. (1965)*

What are the opportunities for success or failure available to students through the YA arts programs?

Do those opportunities connect to opportunities for success or failure in other areas of school life in any meaningful way?

What opportunities do students have to learn about themselves through YA arts programs?

#### **Emotional Intelligence**

*Reference: Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, Gross, J.J., & John, O.P. (2013)*

What individual and group activities do students engage in during YA arts programs? Do students' actions during these activities translate to other areas of school life?

What opportunities for exploring emotions are available to students through YA arts programs?

How do students interact with each other during YA arts programs?

Do student interactions in YA programs connect to other classes in any way?

## Appendix D

### SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

#### **YA Programs**

Tell me about the YA programs at the school. What are they like?

Have you learned anything from the YA arts programs at the school? If so, what have you learned?

#### **Academic Achievement**

Do your experiences in the YA arts programs influence your experiences in other academic subjects?

Would you say that YA arts programs affect your academic performance? Why or why not?

#### **School Attendance**

Do you like to go to school?

How often are you absent from school?

Is there anything you look forward to when you go to school?

Is there anything that you don't look forward to when you go to school?

Do YA arts programs help you with school? Why or why not?

#### **Self-Esteem**

*Reference: Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, Rosenberg, M. (1965)*

What are the opportunities for success or failure available to students through the YA arts programs?

Do those opportunities connect to opportunities for success or failure in other areas of school life in any meaningful way?

What opportunities do students have to learn about themselves through YA arts programs?

Is there anything that you have learned about yourself from YA programs?

#### **Emotional Intelligence**

*Reference: Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, Gross, J.J., & John, O.P. (2013)*

Is there anything that you have learned about emotions from YA arts programs?

What individual and group activities do you engage in during YA arts programs? Do your actions during these activities translate to other areas of school life?

What opportunities for exploring emotions do you have in YA arts programs?

How do you interact with other students during YA arts programs?

Do your interactions with other students in YA programs connect to other classes in any way?

## Appendix E

### SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

#### **YA Programs**

Have you seen a noticeable change in the school environment as a result of YA programming at the school?

Are there any experiences with students that particularly stand out as being connected to YA programs at the school?

#### **Academic Achievement**

Have you noticed significant connections between students' experiences in the YA arts programs and their academic progress?

Would you say that YA arts programs affect student academic performance? Why or why not?

Do you continue to use YA program materials and continue projects after teaching artists leave?

#### **School Attendance**

Has there been a noticeable change in school attendance since YA programs were first implemented at the school?

Does YA programming have an effect on student engagement at the school?

#### **Self-Esteem**

*Reference: Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, Rosenberg, M. (1965)*

How do students deal with success and failure in YA arts programs?

Do you see students translating their experience with success and failure in YA art programs to other areas of school life?

#### **Emotional Intelligence**

*Reference: Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, Gross, J.J., & John, O.P. (2013)*

How do students interact with each other during YA arts programs?

Do student interactions in YA programs connect to other classes in any way?

Do students explore emotions in YA programs? If so, what do they learn? Is what they learn expressed in other areas of school life?

**Appendix F**

*Code Frequencies*

