



Young
Audiences
Arts for
Learning

Indiana

Overarching Findings across studies:

- 1. Students experiencing the Arts for Learning Lessons showed a continuous and statistically significant pattern of improvement that was reliable across grade levels, geographic locations, and school districts.**

It is magnified by similar positive findings ranging from the study in fall 2006 through spring, 2009, which collectively involved thousands of students in hundreds of schools in more than a dozen locations across the country. The emergence of a positive pattern of effectiveness supports claims that students experiencing the A4L Lessons, if implemented with the prescribed professional development and follow-up coaching, and with fidelity of delivery by teachers in the classroom, will predictably show improvement in the targeted literacy concepts.

Research claims that can be generalized to a national program can only be obtained through large scale research studies that sample the whole population, comply with strict protocols for implementation, use instruments that are field-tested and reliable, and that employ a qualified external evaluator to analyze and interpret the data.

- 2. Strength of treatment does make a difference. Students experiencing an Arts for Learning Lessons Unit with a related A4L Residency showed greater improvement in literacy skills and knowledge than students receiving only one Unit or students in the comparison group that did not participate in the A4L Lessons.**

Students in the conditions receiving two Units plus one or two Residencies showed the greatest gains, even in sub-studies that focused primarily on English Language Learners (ELL). The combination of one Unit and a Residency, two Units, or other combinations with multiple A4L components were more effective than the comparison groups in all locations, although in some sites the sample sizes were too small to be statistically significant.

- 3. The scientific research design for evaluating the Arts for Learning Lessons meets the level of accountability required for major government funding.**

Compliance with this level of rigor is neither typical nor feasible for most arts integration or arts education programs. Such studies require the cooperation of participating school districts and the objectivity of a respected and highly qualified external evaluator.

- a. **The results of all the cited studies are statistically significant or reliable at a .05 or .01 level**, meaning that there is 95% - 99% certainty that the student gains are attributed to the A4L Lessons and not to chance.
- b. **Students' gain scores**, meaning the amount of improvement they made as a result of the A4L Lessons instructional approach, **showed a consistent pattern of improvement for the key literacy skills and knowledge for each Unit and Residency**. Improvement was also shown in Cross-Unit skills in literacy and the art form, as well as learning and life skills that are reinforced in all Units.
- c. **Students receiving the Arts for Learning Lessons and A4L Residency improved more on the targeted literacy concepts than students in the comparison group, who received the regular literacy curriculum** for their school.
- d. **Students showed greater interest and engagement in the A4L Lessons** than in their regular literacy curriculum.
- e. **Students liked the A4L Lessons more than their "regular reading class" and thought it was easier** (which is particularly important since the same students also showed greater improvement when using the A4L Lessons).
- f. **Teachers in the study reported a high level of confidence that the A4L professional development and coaching support from the YA team sufficiently prepared them to implement the Lessons Unit(s)**.
- g. **Teachers, principals and objective researchers reported that students were highly engaged and showed positive attitudes toward experiencing the A4L Lessons in their classrooms**.
- h. **Teachers were comfortable in using the arts in both the Lessons Units and subsequently in applications with other subjects**.
- i. **After using the A4L Lessons, teachers reported that they understood and could identify areas in the curriculum with a natural connection to the arts**.

A New Window on A4L: The 2008 – 2009 Interview Study, a qualitative study conducted by the University of Washington, conducted interviews with A4L stakeholders about their experiences with the program. The interviews focused on a range of topics, including perspective on the program, the perceived learning and other benefits of the program, and the teacher development and other key issues related to disseminating the A4L Lessons project.

An overarching goal of the interview research was to collect data that could complement data on student learning – data that was being collected in the 2008-2009 school year as part of the A4L national research study.

Key Findings:

1. **A4L Lessons' benefits to teachers and students in the development of the Literacy Skills and 21st –Century Skills are visible and convincing.**

- a. Teachers who were not officially in the program were incorporating elements of A4L instruction into their classrooms. This migration would not happen if learning benefits were not plainly visible to teachers.
 - b. Learning benefits described include skills directly related to traditional literacy and skills that enable students to be successful communicators in the 21st century.
 - c. Interviewees observed 21st century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, teamwork, planning, brainstorming, problem solving, and compromise.
- 2. A4L Lessons engage students at unusually high levels**
 - a. Engagement visible in both students' behaviors and comments about the program
 - b. Interviewees linked engagement to program's incorporation of the arts.
 - 3. A4L Lessons program has wide appeal among students, including those for diverse populations**
 - a. A4L helped teachers engage children who are not engaged by traditional, all-verbal, sit-at-your-desk curricula.
 - b. Interviewees attributed this appeal to the empowerment and improved self-concept that A4L grants to students who do not normally excel.
 - c. Interviewees were clear about the program's appeal and effectiveness for English Language Learners (ELL).
 - 4. The A4L program provides unusually strong arts instruction**
 - a. The program includes types of art forms that are often absent in traditional programs.
 - b. The depth of arts instruction was particularly related to the artistic concepts and vocabulary.
 - 5. A4L offers strong teaching and learning strategies that are transferred beyond the program itself**
 - a. Interviewees cited evidence that students' learning gains were visible enough to convince other teachers to incorporate A4L elements.
 - b. Students appear to recognize the utility of the strategies and concepts they learn in A4L programs, because interviewees reported that students are transferring these concepts and strategies to other parts of the curriculum.

Learning and Life skills taught in the A4L Lessons, such as critical thinking, creative problem solving, teamwork, reflective analyses and self assessment, are essential to life-long learning and to helping students be responsible for their learning in all subjects.

- Make sure to emphasize the benefits of “strength of treatment” – meaning that although there is some benefit to the students of experiencing one Unit and/or a Residency, the benefits multiply exponentially when there is sustained instruction over time.
- The Arts for Learning program includes not only a research-based effective program, but also provides assessment instruments and strategies that can be replicated in their schools at the local level.
- Use both the quantitative and qualitative reports in making your case. The statistics make the case for accountability but the qualitative observations, interviews and quotes tell compelling stories that convince them to try the program.
- The point of student engagement can be connected to improving student attendance and classroom behavior, as well as increasing motivation and time on task. Those are benefits that help students be enthusiastic, improved learners.