

National Museum of Women in the Arts
Art, Books, and Creativity

Final Report
Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

The National Museum of Women in the Arts received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education in 2003 to develop an arts integration curriculum, *Art, Books, and Creativity*, and to study the impact of that curriculum on student learning. The objectives of *Art, Books, and Creativity* were to increase students' knowledge of visual arts concepts and vocabulary, to increase students' written expression related to art concepts, and to increase students' artistic self-confidence. The *Art, Books, and Creativity* program objectives were designed to support the existing learning objectives of participating school districts. Teachers participating in *Art, Books, and Creativity* were provided with professional development workshops and resources designed to support the program objectives. Resource materials included the *Art, Books, and Creativity* curriculum, an *Exploring Art* booklet for each student that served as an introduction to the visual arts and to art museums, a blank journal for each student, art materials for curriculum lessons, resources for each class to visit an art museum, and a series of four visiting artists/writers in each participating classroom.

The learning gains of program participants were tracked and compared to those of non-participants. Learning gains were measured as the difference between pre-test and post-test scores on an art instrument tailored to reflect the *Art, Books, and Creativity* program goals and objectives. These score differences were quantitatively analyzed using a multilevel analysis. Two school districts participated in *Art, Books, and Creativity*: Albuquerque Public Schools in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Arlington Public Schools in Arlington, Virginia. In Albuquerque, the program was implemented by classroom teachers and in Arlington the program was implemented by art teachers. In both school districts, all experimental and control schools selected for the program were classified as Title 1 schools so that program effects could be assessed. Over the two-year duration of the program, a total of twenty-five schools, forty-six teachers, and sixty-one classrooms participated in *Art, Books, and Creativity*. An equal number of non-participating schools and teachers acted as a control group. Control schools were matched as closely as possible to the participating schools in terms of student socioeconomic status and general achievement scores.

Over the two-year period, the learning gains in visual arts concepts and vocabulary, written expression, and the composite gains of both components were overall significantly greater for the program participants than those of the non-participating control group. However, in Year One alone, the gains in written expression were not significantly greater for participants, and it was surmised that encouraging fuller use of the program's writing component would remedy this. During the second year of the program, the writing component was more fully implemented than during the first year, and the quantitative analysis indicated that written gains were significantly greater for the participants. The analysis also found that the program effect for this writing component was greater in participating schools with students of lower socioeconomic status.

Teacher focus groups and surveys were used to evaluate the *Art, Books, and Creativity* curriculum, the professional development workshops, the *Exploring Art* text and other resources, the museum visit, the visiting artists' workshops, and the students' creation of artists' books. The professional development workshops were perceived to be both useful and effective by all teachers participating in the program. The training needs of art teachers and general classroom teachers differed, as was expected, and served general classroom teachers particularly well. *Exploring Art* was popular with students, although teachers had mixed opinions about it. Some teachers were concerned that the reading level was too challenging for their particular group of fourth graders; other teachers did not feel the reading level was an issue.

All students participating in *Art, Books, and Creativity* visited an art museum at a mid-point in the program. Students in Arlington visited the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C.; students in Albuquerque visited the Albuquerque Museum of Art in Albuquerque, N.Mex. Teachers reported that students were positively engaged with docents and that they were enthusiastic in demonstrating and applying the visual arts knowledge they had acquired during the first half of the program.

After the museum visit, students met with visiting artists and writers for instruction in creative writing, illustration techniques, and bookmaking. The students then planned and produced their own handmade artists' books. Teachers indicated that students were inspired by the visiting artists and were engaged in the bookmaking activities. The classroom teachers appreciated having a project that integrated language arts and visual arts. They stressed that the project played to the students' strengths, allowing students who struggle to express themselves in either writing or in visual art an opportunity to create something and then respond to it using the other discipline. Not all of the art teachers were comfortable supervising the language arts and writing components of the project, so in the second year many of the art teachers coordinated with their students' classroom teachers on the writing component. In general, teachers perceived that the *Art, Books, and Creativity* program supported their arts education learning objectives as well as language arts learning objectives. In particular, teachers in Albuquerque stressed that the program provided students with more general knowledge and felt the program engaged their students and provided them with motivation to write.

In conclusion, *Art, Books, and Creativity* achieved its main objectives of increasing students' knowledge of visual arts concepts and vocabulary and improving students' written expression related to art concepts. Teachers' feedback pertaining to the *Art, Books, and Creativity* curriculum, professional development workshops, and resources were positive, and teachers indicated that *Art, Books, and Creativity* supports district arts education learning objectives and some language arts learning objectives.