



Classroom Outcomes Evaluation 2015-16 through 2017-18

Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hartford Performs is a collaborative network of Hartford Public Schools, arts providers, community organizations, funders and other supporters working together in a planned and integrated way to deliver quality arts education programs to Hartford Public School students. Since the 2010-11 school year, Hartford Performs arts-based learning experiences have been provided by arts providers in close collaboration with teachers, principals and other educational staff, through dance, music, theatre and visual arts programs. Multiple delivery systems (formats) such as in-school workshops or performances, artist residencies, offsite workshops and tours, and others were used to help teachers optimize the experience for students and change their own classroom practices as well as to help young people learn about new topics, develop and enhance vocabulary, express themselves artistically, verbally and in writing, while thinking creatively, trying new things and enhancing their active listening skills. This 2015-16 through 2017-18 evaluation, commissioned by Hartford Performs and focused on the 2017-18 school year is a continued assessment of programming and classroom outcomes, including those achieved by both teachers and students.

Program Details

Hartford Performs provided arts programs to all of Hartford Public Schools' elementary and middle schools in Hartford during the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, and all but one in the 2015-16 school year. This included programming in all four art forms, dance, music, theatre and visual arts, using multiple formats and covering multiple curricular areas. Programs span the entire arts integration continuum, from access (experiential), to alignment (participatory), and integration (students demonstrate understanding by creating). All schools booked and participated in multiple offerings. During the 2017-18 school year, the primary subject of this evaluation:

- A total of 271 program titles were offered. Of these, 187 were booked including 27 dance programs, 45 music programs, 72 theatre programs and 43 visual arts programs. These were booked multiple times by different schools resulting in 836 programs, 95.6% being completed.
- Multiple formats were utilized providing students opportunities to participate both at school and offsite. Most included hands-on workshop options for students, so that students could fully experience programs.
- More than 13,000 students participated each year, with most schools participating in at least a dozen programs. More than 100 professional teaching artists serving as arts providers were involved.
- Students had opportunities to learn about the arts and to use the arts as a vehicle for exploring curricular areas. About half (54%) of the programs included a focus on English, 12% on Math, 20% on Science and 34% on Social Studies. About 20% of the programs covered multiple curricular areas.

Evaluation Details

In the spring of 2016, Hartford Performs first engaged the services of Evaluation Services to conduct an independent evaluation update. This included collection and analysis of extant data from surveys administered by Hartford Performs in 2014-15 and direct administration of surveys and review of program records to obtain data about the 2015-16 school year. The evaluation was designed to answer two main questions: (1) **How and to what extent have Hartford Performs programs been delivered effectively and affected student learning and development?** (2) **To what extent have Hartford Performs Professional Learning and visiting artists' efforts supported desired teacher outcomes?** To answer these questions, program data from the Arts Integration Program Database were reviewed and combined together with responses to surveys answered by participating teachers (2015-16 through 2017-18) and arts providers (2017-18) and compared over years, by school type and by grade level where appropriate.

Evaluation Findings

Results of 2015-16 through 2017-18 data analyses showed that Hartford Performs programs continued to support desired teacher outcomes and to contribute in important ways to desired student outcomes, across grade levels, curricular areas and art forms, for students attending neighborhood and magnet schools. Findings from both teachers and arts providers also showed that Hartford Performs programs are being delivered as expected. As detailed by multiple teachers and arts providers, Hartford Performs has maintained and enhanced the results documented in both its initial impact study ("Summary of Impact over the First Three Years (2010-2013)" by Public Consulting Group, published January 2014) and the 2015-16 evaluation conducted by Evaluation Services.

- **A total of 93% or more of the teacher respondents concurred that Hartford Performs is positively contributing to every key program outcome.** For all three years, at both neighborhood and magnet schools, this included having a positive impact on students' confidence, meeting learning goals for the grade level, engaging students, increasing students' knowledge about and interest in the subject matter. The teacher respondents also consistently indicated the programs were age appropriate and met teacher expectations.
- **A substantial majority of teacher respondents (60%) reported that Hartford Performs programs had a minor (10.5%), moderate (28%) or major (21.5%) effect on student attendance.** This was true for 64% of teachers at neighborhood schools and 51% of teachers at magnet schools.
- **Almost all teacher respondents at both neighborhood and magnet schools agreed/strongly agreed that Hartford Performs programs consistently or increasingly helped participating students achieve all of the targeted student outcomes.** Teachers could provide specific examples of students' accomplishments.

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- A total of 99% *agreed/strongly agreed* Hartford Performs programs helped students try new things. A total of 98% *agreed/strongly agreed* Hartford Performs programs helped students think creatively and express themselves artistically.
- A total of 97% *agreed/strongly agreed* Hartford Performs programs helped students with social skills and 96% *agreed/strongly agreed* Hartford Performs programs helped students work collaboratively with other students. Additionally, 95% *agreed/strongly agreed* Hartford Performs programs helped students develop/enhance their active listening skills and express themselves verbally.
- A total of 93% *agreed/strongly agreed* Hartford Performs programs helped students with retention of information, to develop/enhance vocabulary, and to develop/enhance their critical evaluation skills; 91% *agreed/strongly agreed* that Hartford Performs programs helped to enhance their problem-solving skills. Most teachers (82%) also *agreed/strongly agreed* Hartford Performs programs helped students express themselves in writing.
- **Feedback about Professional Learning showed it was well received and productive.** Teachers universally valued Hartford Performs' Professional Learning opportunities and intended to use the strategies and techniques taught in them. All participating teachers *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the workshops were well organized, the content clear, the handouts useful, and the facilitator knowledgeable. All respondents also agreed that they planned to use some or all of the strategies taught.
- **Almost half of the teachers in both neighborhood and magnet schools have already done something differently in their classrooms since participating in the Hartford Performs programs.** Teachers were able to describe multiple examples of what they have done differently and what they plan to continue doing differently.
- **Almost all teacher respondents *agreed/strongly agreed* with every statement about expected program delivery.** The length of the programs was appropriate, the database accurately described program content, arts providers were professional and approachable with both teachers and students, handouts and other materials were relevant to students and useful to teachers, and arts providers conducted the programs effectively. **These outcomes were consistently reported across all three years, for both neighborhood and magnet schools and corroborated in 2017-18 by reports of the arts providers.**
- **As in both 2015-16 and 2016-17, almost all 2017-18 respondents reported they would select the same program they selected again in the future.**
- **Teacher respondents reported consistently positive overall ratings of student experience, confirmed by students.** A total of 94% of respondents rated students overall experience with Hartford Performs programs as *Good* (26%) or *Excellent* (68%), and this was true for both lower grades (K – 4 students 94%) and upper grades (5th – 8th grade students 93%), and especially among teachers at neighborhood schools, where 71% compared to 61% of those at magnet schools rated students' overall experiences as *excellent*. Teacher comments confirmed, Hartford Performs programs engaged students, enhanced lessons, and had lasting value. Some teachers collected feedback

directly from students in 2017-18 as well: 92% reported their students' responses were *mostly positive*.

- **Through their Lesson Plan Summaries, almost all teachers confirmed Hartford Performs programs met their instructional objectives. Many teachers also confirmed they were optimizing program participation** by introducing the arts experience before the program occurred (most), differentiating/scaffolding during the program (some), and extending it afterward (most).
- **While most Hartford Performs programs were identified as strong, a total of 21% of the teacher respondents indicated there were some areas of the programs that could be strengthened.** Many fewer teachers in 2017-18 reported this: in 2015-16 a total of 37% of teachers indicated there were programs that could be strengthened. Detailed feedback is continuously reviewed in response.

Issues for Further Consideration

In addition to the overwhelmingly positive feedback provided regarding Hartford Performs programs and arts providers, respondents also helped to identify some challenges and made some suggestions regarding ways to strengthen some program experiences. Hartford Performs is very actively monitoring specific program/school/arts provider experiences and staff report they use the information throughout the school year to support program quality. Their comprehensive feedback data also allows for complex assessment and evaluation.

- Over-years reviews showed substantial consistency, and in many cases increases in desired results. Similarly, comparisons of responses from teachers at neighborhood schools to those from magnet schools showed great similarity except for three areas: attendance effects, development of key, non-academic skills such as collaboration, and regarding students' overall experience. In each case, proportionately more teachers from neighborhood schools *agreed/strongly agreed* regarding positive outcomes. Continued post hoc trend assessment across multiple periods of time (e.g., comprehensive assessments conducted every two-three years), combined with ongoing program monitoring is strongly advised.
- Where there were noteworthy differences in 2015-16, for 2017-18 comparisons by grade level were not remarkable. Additionally, where there were specific requests by individual respondents about programming for older students, or for the youngest students, these were only offered by a very limited number of individuals, where it had been identified as a theme in the previous evaluation.
- Although comparisons must be approached cautiously as some program format strategies are used more frequently than others, review of program ratings by format show important differences. A total of 83% of respondents rated students' experiences as *excellent* when the program was delivered as an in-school performance and in-school workshop; 72% of respondents provided *excellent* ratings for in-school short term residencies, 70% of respondents provided *excellent* ratings for students' experiences for off-site tours and off-site workshops and off-site performances. While more than half of respondents provided *excellent* ratings no matter what the format, these results suggest

that format and ensuring that students get access to multiple formats continues to matter.

- Respondents' experiences of program quality were very consistent, but as indicated throughout the report there were some noteworthy differences in reports and responses from teachers by art form. Given their ongoing careful monitoring, this is definitely known to Hartford Performs staff, but identification of the degree of differences may help staff continue effectively customizing and managing programs. Specifically:
 - Only about 18% of those who responded to Program Response Forms about dance programs indicated there were elements that could be strengthened, this was true for 26% of the responses about programs with visual arts content. Special attention to programs with visual arts content and to the teachers who select them may be merited.
 - A total of 59% of teachers who were providing feedback about dance programs in which they had participated as compared to only 40%-42% of teachers who responded to questions about visual arts or theatre programs indicated they had already done something differently in their classrooms. Are there elements of the dance programs that can inform other programs?
 - Teachers identified some issues for Hartford Performs to consider. Most of these were unique to a specific program or class and all individual respondent feedback is available directly to Hartford Performs for internal review. Two themes among the responses were evident: fit between the arts provider and the class is especially important, and timing is also critical. Most teachers were effusive about how well the arts provider worked with their students, but a few arts provider/school connections were less successful. Again, these were addressed directly and immediately in response to the survey feedback. Continued monitoring is strongly advised and Hartford Performs staff have demonstrated complete commitment to that. Timing issues were also program/arts provider/school specific: a few teacher respondents indicated the programs were too long for the group involved and several teacher respondents indicated the programs were too short.
 - Through the Lesson Plan Summaries, about 15% of responding teachers reported they had additional curriculum needs that could be met with Hartford Performs programs. A total of 91% of those teacher respondents indicated they wanted more programs in the area of social studies, 90% requested more literacy-focused programs, 85% reported they could use more math programming and 81% said more science programs would be helpful. A total of 78% indicated they would like to see more programs in music, 72% wanted more programs in art, 56% wanted more PE programs, 54% wanted more dance programs and 51% wanted more theatre programs.
- Arts providers also shared detailed feedback about when the programs were most effective and when program delivery was more challenging. Many reported that teacher engagement was quite varied and were quite clear that increased teacher engagement was closely associated with enhanced program delivery/enhanced student experiences.

Action Steps

In response to these findings and to the requests from respondents, Hartford Performs plans to take the following action steps.

1. Continue working with all arts providers in the current cadre and using data reported by Lesson Plan Summary teacher respondents, identify new providers and programs as needed.
2. Continue providing multi-disciplinary arts-based programming for Hartford Public schools using the strategies identified as effective through this evaluation and other internal assessment.
3. Continue monitoring program, teacher and student outcomes provided by both teachers and arts providers throughout the school year, at year-end and over-years. Continue focusing attention on soliciting this feedback in a timely manner and ensure that resources are available for this purpose.
4. Continue refining the Professional Learning model to provide comprehensive arts-integrated training for teachers. Expand Professional Learning opportunities as feasible.
5. For future evaluation, identify possible case studies to pursue using extant data (e.g., schools or programs that are especially associated with positive student outcomes or those who have used a very consistent or a varied strategy of program selection). Continue internal and independent evaluation in alternating years.
6. Continue collecting data about, and where possible from students and continue to review and summarize arts provider feedback.
7. Continue strategizing regarding use of formal program and Professional Learning observations.
8. Continue working with Hartford Public Schools to maximize Professional Learning opportunities, particularly along the lines most requested by teachers who participated in the 2017-18 program.
9. Continue collecting and analyzing Lesson Plan Summaries (LPS) to ensure permanent records are created and planning ideas are available for circulation. Make Lesson Plan suggestions and exemplars available to teachers through the Hartford Performs Program Database. Simplify the use of the LPS for ongoing comprehensive evaluation where feasible.
10. Develop additional Professional Learning seminars for arts providers based on feedback from teacher Program Response Forms and Lesson Plan Summaries.
11. Continue to review all program/provider data to identify those where additional support is needed or where exemplary sharing is advisable.

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Examples of Respondent Feedback

The most valuable aspect was that my students were able to leave the classroom, but still engage in meaningful learning. Even some of my most reluctant students had a million questions about Anne Frank after we left the play. The whole ride home and back at school I was able to allow the students to do some extended research on the topic and they were eager to learn more.

Students who normally would be tardy or absent came to school and on-time.

This math through music program was amazing! Both first grade classes were extremely engaged and loved finding and creating the rhythmic beats while applying it to math!

Watching this particular film helped students broaden their understanding of the Civil Rights movement and how they too can have an impact on society today.

Most students were willing to try things that were out of their comfort zone. I even learned a few things that I never would have thought of before.

The connection to our classroom curriculum aligned perfectly and extended their learning to incorporate poetry writing. This experience engaged EVERY student. Even students considered to be "heavy hitters."

[The arts provider] makes students want to write! After scribbling notes and developing questions, students couldn't wait to write.

These activities provide students with an enhanced approach to learning skills that may not occur in the classroom on a daily basis. The creative level of the artists is above the level most teachers can provide for their students. Additionally, the teachers become inspired by these visits.

[The arts provider] provided an excellent experience for students to "think out of the box" and to work together to accomplish a task. It was a most enjoyable experience. He was able to engage every student and give them an experience that they are still talking about.

We love this program and how it closely ties to our curriculum. Students really are able to experience the topic in a unique way.

After the arts experience, we entered into our new unit and continued learning about expressions and equations. As students learned new concepts, they consistently related it back to the work and learning they did with [the arts provider].

I saw students who have trouble participating in other areas of school life participate with [the Hartford Performs program] openly and enthusiastically.

Hartford Performs continues to provide excellent and authentic experiences for our students. Hartford students certainly have their education enriched and expanded upon due to their experiences with Hartford Performs Art providers.

Hartford Performs has been a wonderful addition to Hartford Public Schools. Children need opportunities to learn in alternate ways.