Connections: Developing English Language Literacy through the Arts

Research and Evaluation of the ArtsConnection DELLTA Programs
Dr. Rob Horowitz
Dr. Elizabeth Beaubrun
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Our research and evaluation team conducted five years of data collection on the DELLTA elementary and middle school programs. Methods included observations, interviews, student assessment and surveys.

Analysis indicates that the DELLTA programs effectively support English language acquisition. Students develop language skills in an engaging, authentic context that they care about, and that provides opportunities for self-expression.

An observational assessment strategy, the Classroom Assessment of Learning and Teaching (CALT), was developed for the project. During observations, researchers rated students on 20 dimensions of student learning and rated teachers and artists on 11 characteristics of effective teaching and partnership. The CALT strategy was employed in over 200 classroom observations of the DELLTA programs.

According to an overall analysis of CALT data, student achievement was strongest in these 7 areas:
1. Motivation
2. Perseverance/Task Persistence
3. Ability to Focus
4. Ownership of Learning
5. Spatial Awareness
6. Self-Confidence
7. Cooperative Learning Skills/Collaboration

Analysis indicates:
- Scores in each area increased during the artist residencies.
- Scores at the end of artist residencies were significantly higher than scores at the beginning of the residencies.
- Scores increased at both elementary and middle schools
- Scores increased in both dance and theater residencies.

These results are strongly supported by teacher ratings of student development, survey data and systematic qualitative analysis of teacher interviews and descriptive observations. The 7 areas, cited above, appear to be pathways, enabling students to acquire and reapply English language skills through engaging and authentic arts and language experiences.